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JANUARY 2023 #220

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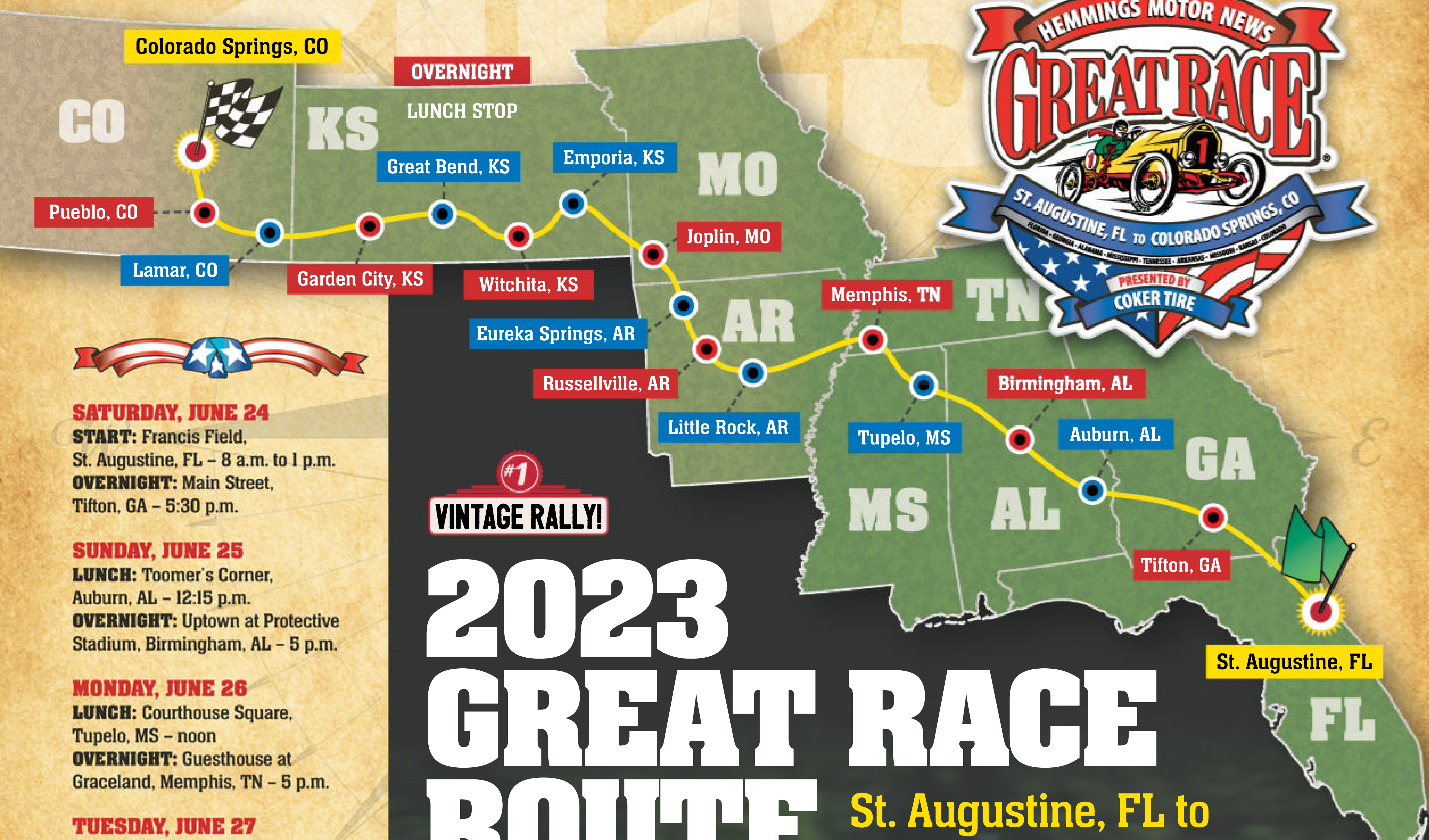
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June 24-
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OVERNIGHT: Main Street,
Tifton, GA – 5:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, JUNE 25
LUNCH: Toomer's Corner,
Auburn, AL – 12:15 p.m.
OVERNIGHT: Uptown at Protective
Stadium, Birmingham, AL – 5 p.m.

MONDAY, JUNE 26
LUNCH: Courthouse Square,
Tupelo, MS – noon
OVERNIGHT: Guesthouse at
Graceland, Memphis, TN – 5 p.m.

TUESDAY, JUNE 27
LUNCH: Clinton Library,
Little Rock, AR – 11:45 a.m.
OVERNIGHT: Russellville Depot,
Russellville, AR – 5 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28
LUNCH: Community Center,
Eureka Springs, AR – 12:15 p.m.
OVERNIGHT: Main Street downtown,
Joplin, MO – 5 p.m.

THURSDAY, JUNE 29
LUNCH: Commercial Street,
Emporia, KS – noon
OVERNIGHT: Old Town,
Wichita, KS – 5 p.m.

FRIDAY, JUNE 30
LUNCH:: Courthouse Square,
Great Bend, KS – noon
OVERNIGHT: Main Street at Stevens
Park, Garden City, KS – 5 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 1
LUNCH: Colorado Welcome Center,
Lamar, CO – 11:45 a.m.
OVERNIGHT: Pueblo Union Depot,
Pueblo, CO – 5 p.m.

SUNDAY, JULY 2
FINISH: Tejon Street,
Colorado Springs, CO – 1 p.m.

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Restoration Education

For fans of vintage vehicles, the topic of auto restoration is part and parcel of our world. Even if you have no interest in performing the work required to bring an old car back to its original state, you've likely had to consider what it takes to make that happen.

My own pursuit of these skills was initially spurred the same way I suspect it was for many enthusiasts—I liked cars that were already many years beyond the showroom, and the examples of my favorites that I could afford were worn out and weathered. If I wanted one for myself that looked and performed as originally intended, I'd have to figure out how to bring back everything the ravages of time had taken away.

That was daunting to a teen who was still trying to figure out how to keep an aging car running—making it look and drive like new was another matter entirely. Particularly intimidating was the prospect of body repair, which, for Northeasterners of the '80s with a penchant for cars of the '60s, meant coping with rust and replacing sections of coachwork that had disappeared.

Fortunately, youthful optimism prevented me from recognizing just how infeasible it would likely be for a kid in the suburbs, without access to anything beyond basic hand tools and a residential garage, to successfully resurrect a battered and neglected 20-year-old Chevy. If I'd been wiser, I might have just figured out how to earn more money to buy a better car, even if it was just a better example of the same 20-year-old Chevy. Instead, I felt some sort of obligation to fix the one I had. Some of that came from the strange connection a young person can make with a motor vehicle—once that car was mine, I wanted to make it better; just trading it off for a better one would have felt like quitting, and maybe even like some sort of betrayal.

The other motivator was this sense that I needed to bring that clapped-out car back to an improved form to prove that I could do it, as if it was some sort of rite of passage for a budding gearhead. My friends and I had looked up to some of the older guys in the area who'd "built" cars we thought were cool, and I wanted to be a part of that set—someone who could turn forlorn junk back into something worthy of desire.

I didn't have the benefit of any particular mentor in those days, so I just dove in, doing what I could and trying to learn as I went. I'd bug anyone I could to glean whatever wisdom I thought that person could offer. As you might imagine, I messed some things up, but there are always lessons to be drawn from failures as well. I kept at it, taking jobs in garages, talking to people who'd made it through complete restorations, and, of course, reading what I could, mostly from magazines.

All these years later, I've learned a lot, and I've worked on quite a few projects, but I'm still not equipped to perform a complete start-to-finish restoration all on my own, one where I execute the entire thing—bodywork, paint job, upholstery—without professional intervention.

I realize that very many "amateur" restorations—those performed by owners who are hobbyists and not professional techs—often entail farming out the most difficult aspects of the project. This is a prudent approach—when paint materials alone can cost thousands of dollars, mistakes get costly in a hurry. Still, I've encountered plenty of home restorers who've tackled every task themselves and achieved stunning results. Those make for great stories, offering inspiration to those of us still pressing on with our own projects by demonstrating what's possible.

One of the stories we're covering this month tells of an MG TD revival that took a turn likely familiar to plenty of us—a project that started as a simple effort to "fix up" a neat old car, which then unraveled into a full-scale renovation as the ham-fisted work of those who came before was revealed. Discoveries like that can bring a car to its end, changing it from a well-worn driver to an abandoned pile of parts, but I suspect that those same feelings of dedication I felt with my first set of wheels have gotten to plenty of other old-car sympathizers as well, leading to happier endings as determined owners push to reach the finish line.

It's a good time for those of us working on vintage vehicles. More and more long-obsolete parts are being reproduced and the proliferation of affordable restoration tools and equipment has made that gear more accessible for hobbyists, helping our cause greatly. Plus, access to vast informational and instructional resources has never been better, thanks to the digital age we live in. Of course, magazines are still helpful, too. So, while I ponder the next hurdle in my own restoration education, reach out and let us know what you'll be working on this winter.

> "... once that car was mine, I wanted to make it better; just trading it off for a better one would have felt like quitting..."

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How to Win at Love

A classic tennis bracelet serves up over 10 carats of sparkle for a guaranteed win

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From that moment on, the tennis bracelet has been on the lips and on the wrists of women in the know. Once called eternity bracelets, these bands of diamonds were known from then on as tennis bracelets, and remain ***the*** hot ticket item with jewelers.

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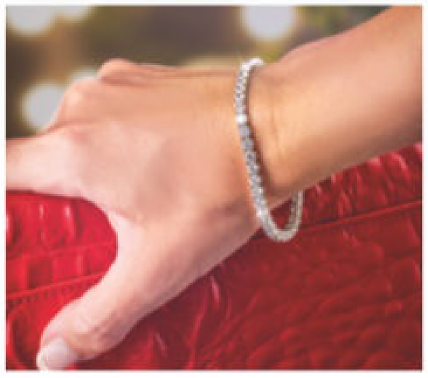

Don’t believe me? The book *“Jewelry and Gems – The Buying Guide,”* praised the technique used in our diamond alternative Diamond*Aura*®: “The best diamond simulation to date, and even some jewelers have mistaken these stones for mined diamonds,” it raved. For comparison, we found a similarly designed 10 carat tennis bracelet with D Flawless diamonds from another company that costs $57,000!

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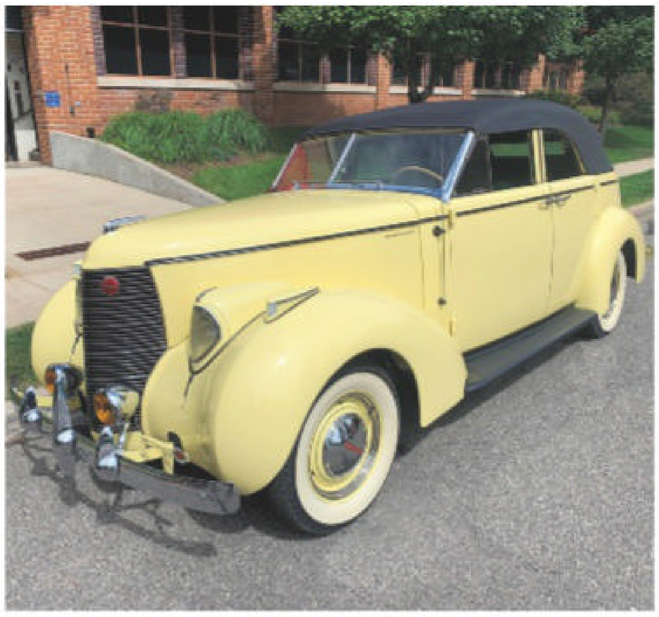
NEWSREPORTS

BY TOM COMERRO

Rare Commander Comes to South Bend



THE STUDEBAKER NATIONAL Museum has announced a new acquisition to its collection: a 1938 Studebaker Commander Stateconvertible sedan that can now be seen in its facilities. The car is thought to be one of just 224 made for the 1938 model year and, even more impressive, it's thought to be one of less than a half-dozen still in existence. The limited convertible sedan was the most expensive model in the Studebaker lineup that year and it features classic styling by Raymond Loewy. Coachwork was courtesy of the Central Manufacturing Company of Connersville, Indiana, which provided bodies to many car companies of the time. The new addition to the museum is finished in Tulip Cream complemented by a green leather interior. The museum is located in downtown South Bend and it is open Monday through Saturday. Visit studebakermuseum.org for more details.

Scholarships Granted for the Future of Collector Car Restoration

THE PISTON FOUNDATION AWARDED 10 INAUGURAL SCHOLARSHIPS TO AUTO restoration students for the class of 2022-2023. The charity was founded to assist students interested in pursuing a career in the field of the collector car industry. The awards were given to students across the country based on their interests in the hobby as demonstrated through their applications, experiences, academic records, financial needs, and video essays. Each awardee will receive up to $5,000 for an academic year.

"Because of the generous gifts of our donors in the car enthusiast community, these students will be able to pursue their dreams and build careers as collector car technicians and restoration specialists," Robert Minnick, founder and CEO of The Piston Foundation, says. "We have worked hard to reach this point after only a year and a half since our launch. Our team is very proud to be awarding our first 10 scholarships. As we continue with our mission, we look forward to presenting many more scholarships in the future."

The recipients of the 2022-23 Piston Fund Scholarships are:

Edwin John Buiter, Sophomore, McPherson College
Victoria Bruno, Senior, McPherson College
Zoe Carmichael, Junior, McPherson College
Jasper A. Fedders, Junior, McPherson College
Ethan Bradford Heck, Freshman, Lanier Technical College
Jacob Koehn, Junior, McPherson College
Dryden Lee Powell, Junior, McPherson College
Joseph Scheidel, Freshman, McPherson College
Joshua Jay Warner, Freshman, McPherson College
Sean Gandy Whetstone, Junior, McPherson College

For more about the students and The Piston Foundation, visit pistonfoundation.org.

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27-28 • Winter Auto Expo
Carlisle, Pennsylvania
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Please note that these events are active as of press time. We recommend you verify the status before making plans to attend.

A-Efforts

THE MODEL A FORD CLUB OF AMERICA HAS BEGUN filling out its calendar for 2023, and the year's events kick off with the annual Winter Swap Meet in Shepherdsville, Kentucky, at the Paroquet Springs Conference center on January 14. Vendor spaces are still available and there will also be a car corral should you wish to find a new Model A or sell yours to a fellow A-enthusiast. Visit kymodela.org for more about the Kentucky meet.

The rest of the Model A Ford Club 2023 schedule is as follows:

- **April 14-15 • Model A and Model T Meet**
  Greenwood, South Carolina • 864-980-7937

- **April 23 • Columbus Chapter Swap Meet**
  Columbus, Indiana • 812-350-8780

- **June 11-16 • Midwest Regional Tour**
  Breckenridge, Colorado • 303-519-0722

- **July 16-21 • MAFCA National Tour**
  Michigan/Indiana • 803-622-0048

- **September 6-10 • New England Meet**
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More events are expected to be added; visit mafca.com for the latest updates.

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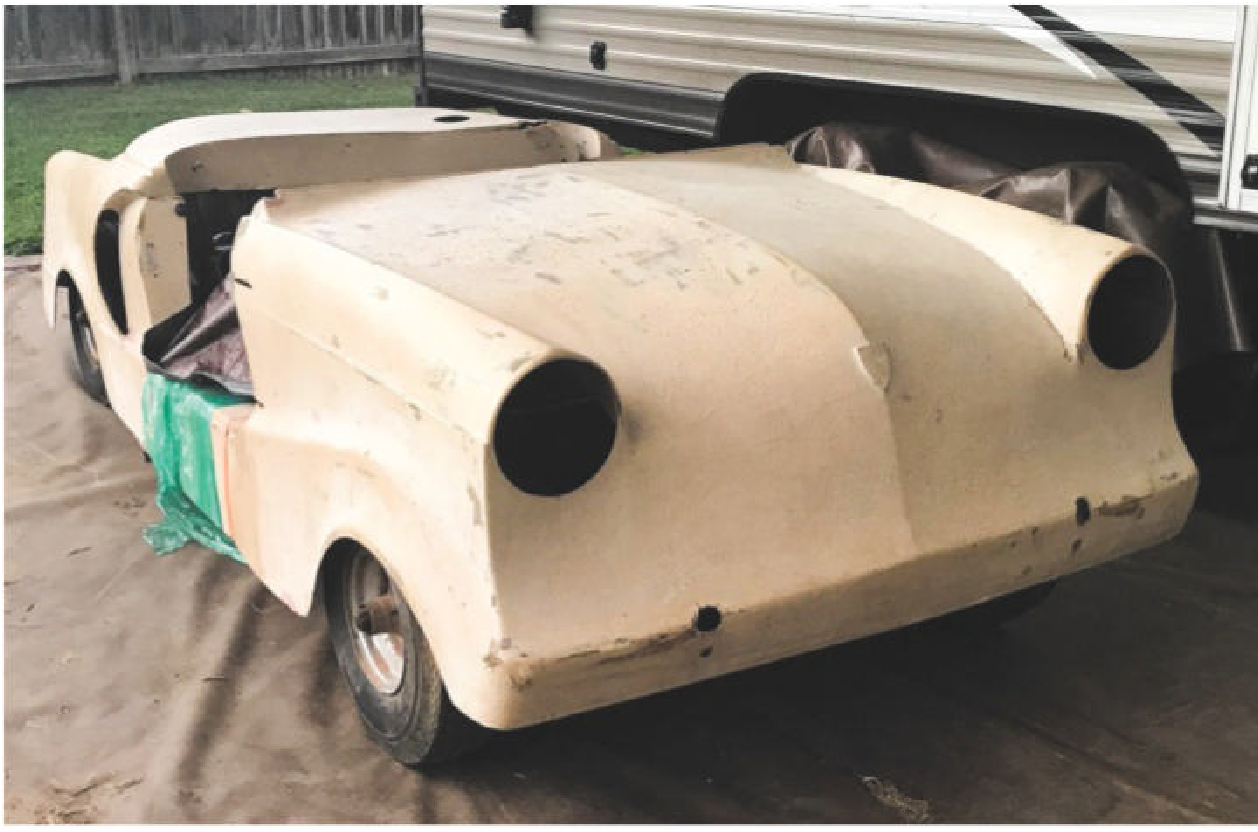
BY DANIEL STROHL



King Midget Basement Resto

KING MIDGET CLUB MEMBERS STILL DON'T KNOW ALL THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT THE PROTOTYPE FIBERGLASS ROADSTER THAT MIDGET MOTORS intended to build. How did the tiny Athens, Ohio-based company plan to power the car? Was it ever meant to have a top? What exactly caused its demise? Now that club president Lee Seats has the prototype in his garage in anticipation of a full restoration and subsequent public display, perhaps some answers will soon come to light.

In the mid-Fifties, King Midget's Dale Orcutt saw fiberglass as an opportunity to both cut some weight and design a body with more complex shapes than the steel-and-aluminum-bodied Model 2 and Model 3's bodies without springing for more expensive tooling. He shaped a model out of clay, took some molds from it, and had a still-unknown fiberglass shop somewhere in Michigan lay up several bodies. One went on a modified Model 2 chassis but plans for production stopped when the fiberglass shop reportedly burned down, taking the molds with it.

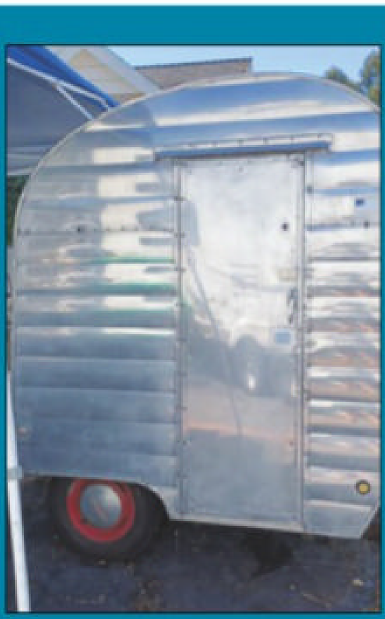
The prototype has since been stored in a barn, then stored somewhere in Florida, and was most recently stored outdoors in Arizona before Seats obtained it and began its restoration in his Tennessee basement. Once completed, the prototype will be showcased in the closest thing the International King Midget Car Club has to a museum: a permanent display in a mall on the east side of Athens.

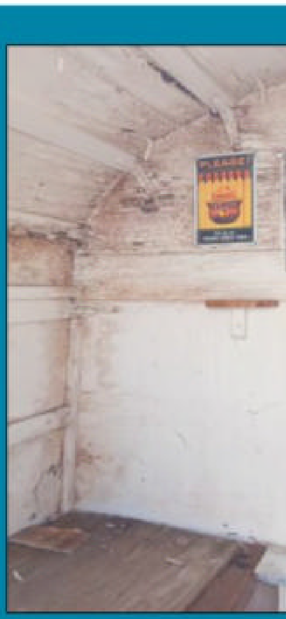
Did Crosley Build a Trailer?

THE CROSLEY MAILING LIST RECENTLY LIT UP WITH WHAT could — maybe — potentially be a new-to-the-community Crosley prototype: an itty-bitty camper.

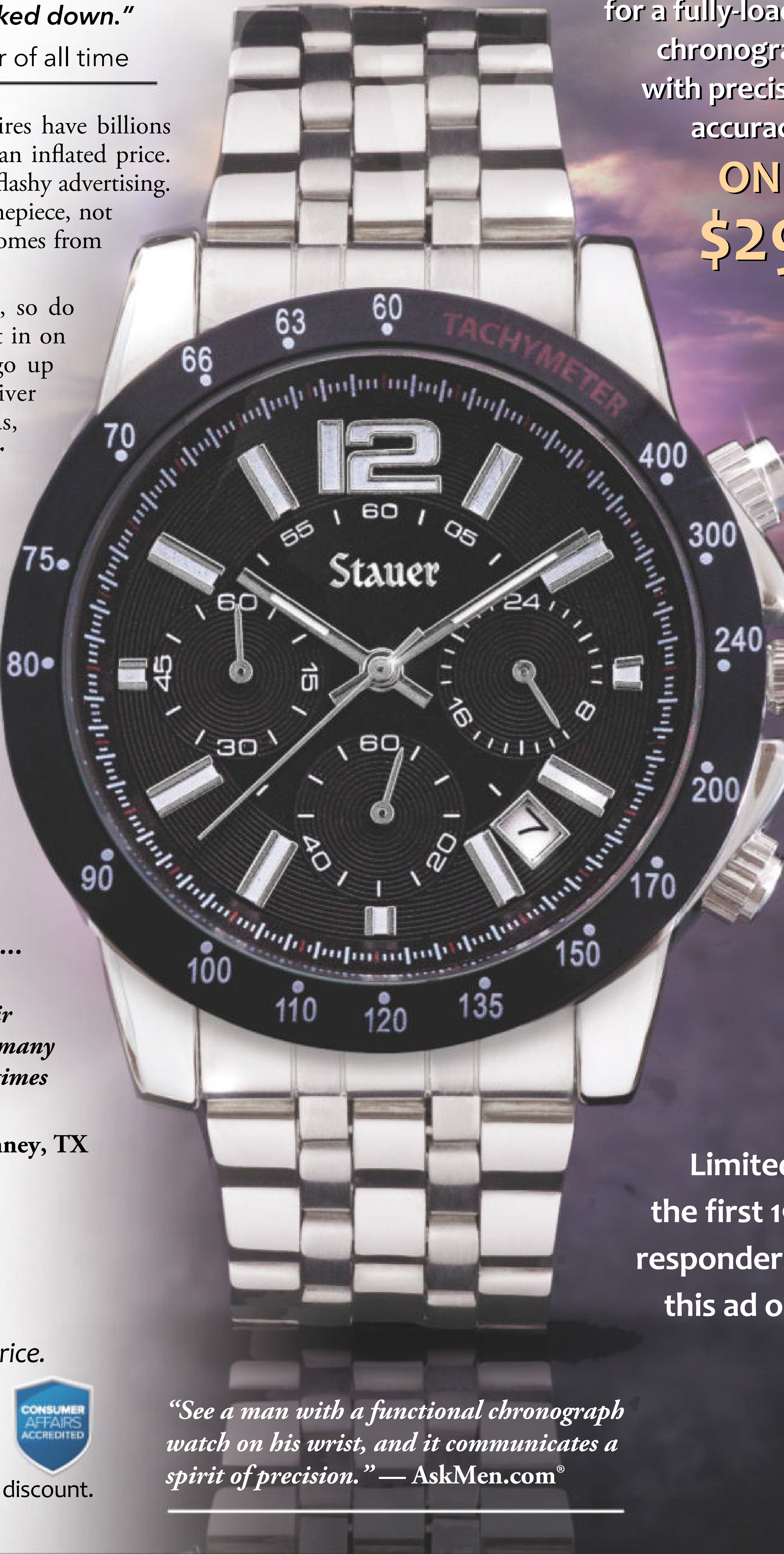
Meant to mimic a canned-ham-style travel trailer, it features wooden construction with ribbed aluminum skin and just a few tiny windows. According to the California-based seller, it measures six feet wide, six feet long, and seven feet tall, so it's just about large enough for an average adult to stand up in — and maybe lie down in with a little scrunching. Surprisingly, the images show not only a bench, presumably for sleeping, but also a privy and a kitchenette.

Whether Powel Crosley's Cincinnati-based empire actually put this together is the big question. It features Crosley wheels and hubcaps and a VIN tag that states "Crosley / 1947 / 9834139." On the other hand, Crosley specialists and historians on the mailing list have never heard of such a prototype, and if it's not coming out of Crosley prototype collector Paul Gorrell's collection, does it really have the imprimatur of authenticity?





Recently discovered a unique or noteworthy classic car? Let us know. Photographs, commentary, questions, and answers should be submitted to Lost & Found, c/o *Hemmings Classic Car,* P.O. Box 196, Bennington, Vermont 05201, or emailed to dstrohl@hemmings.com. For more Lost & Found, visit blog.hemmings.com/index.php/category/lost-and-found.



SECRETS OF A BILLIONAIRE REVEALED

"Price is what you pay; value is what you get. Whether we're talking about socks or stocks, I like buying quality merchandise when it is marked down."

– wisdom from the most successful investor of all time

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RECAPS LETTERS

EMAIL YOUR THOUGHTS AND COMMENTS TO: **tmcgean@hemmings.com**

REGARDING "STEALTH STOPPING," the disc brake conversion article in the September issue (*HCC* #216), I suggest less invasive alternatives:

1. Use a smaller-bore master cylinder. Sleeve the original master cylinder down by ⅛ inch. This gives more hydraulic psi for any given pedal pressure. The trade-off is more pedal travel, which is easily managed.

2. High friction linings. Learn friction codes and specify replacement drum brake linings with "GG" friction rating. Linings with EE friction will work with a power brake booster but not manual brakes. The FF friction is borderline acceptable. The friction information is supposed to be printed on the lining edge or shoe, but this is done inconsistently.

3. Soft lining composition for fast break-in. Linings with a lifetime warranty are extremely hard and take forever to seat if the drum is already oversize. Seating occurs when enough lining material is worn off to exactly conform to the drum and make full lining to drum contact. Stopping ability is compromised until then. A fingernail test is instructive.

4. Don't turn drums. If a drum is grossly oversize, it will also take linings too many miles to seat. The past generation almost never turned drums. If the drums are scored, let them be—the linings will conform. If the drums are more than .030 inch oversize, replace them if new ones are available or have linings custom ground to conform. The goal is to have full lining contact in the fewest miles.

5. Descend hills in the same gear used to ascend.

Bob Adler
Adler's Antique Autos, Inc
Stephentown, New York

FOR A SPLIT SECOND, WHEN I pulled the November *HCC* (#218) from my mailbox, I was stunned. You see, in the summer of 1959, I had my first great job with the Washington State Department of Game, which I took so I could afford brand-new wheels. At age 19, I bought a 1959 Pontiac Catalina two-door hardtop in Gulf Stream Blue right off the showroom floor of Hawkins Pontiac in Auburn, Washington. By the end of September, I had spent $90 on gas when it was 30 cents a gallon! But I digress. For a moment, on the magazine cover, was a fine facsimile of my Pontiac's grille... on an Edsel! OMG! True, my Pontiac had a wraparound windshield and "Wide Track," but still. Now I wonder, did GM sell the design rights/patent to Ford or was this a gross case of plagiarism?

Thanks for taking me back to those "thrilling days of yesteryear" each month.

Arnie Galli
Auburn, Washington

Most of the American automakers were drawing inspiration from each other in those highly competitive days during the golden age of showroom flash, and we're confident in saying none would have officially passed along even an old styling design in any official capacity. Just another case of Detroit's players jockeying for position in the all-important sales race.

I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED THE article about the '54 Chevy two-door sedan. My first new-car purchase was a '54 210 Delray, six-cylinder, "straight shift" with no heater or radio. That was the first year of the Delray model, I believe. It was special in that it had all Naugahyde upholstery, including the headliner and the door panels; the door panels also had wide stainless steel kick panels at the bottoms and in the rear side panels. The seats were Naugahyde that was stitched in a quilted pattern in black with white trim. I did not know it was a special model when I bought it and the dealer never made any comment on it. I bought it on September 1, 1954, just before the famous V-8s came out. I paid $1,800 to Kline Chevrolet in Norfolk, Virginia. Mine was black with a white top. Loved that car!

Donroy Ober
Mechanicsville, Virginia

I ENJOYED, AND FOUND WORTHWHILE, Terry McGean's column on whether young people can be interested in cars built before their time ("Source of the Spark," *HCC* #217). I was a teenager in the 1950s and I think the cars of that decade are really among some of the coolest of all time. But since I became accustomed to them in my youth, I enjoy something a little different: the cars of the mid 1930s to the late 1940s. They are easier to drive than older cars but still modern enough to be able to drive on the highway. I have a 1939 Chrysler Imperial four-door sedan that I have had since 2010. I've been a car nut all of my life. When I was about 9 or 10, around 1950, I discovered a series of plastic model kits of brass-era cars that I just fell in love with, including an early Model T, a 1903 Ford Model A, 1903 Cadillac, 1909 Stanley Steamer, and others. Those were the real antiques in those days!

I also enjoyed David Conwill's article on the '54 Chevy ("A Bel Air for the Long Haul," *HCC* #217). I drove a '54 Chevy one time in my life. I was working as a stock boy for a summer job in downtown Baton Rouge in the late 1950s and my boss asked me to do an errand for her during work hours and to take her car. I found it incredibly slow, with little acceleration at all. Of course, I was comparing it to my own 1951 Mercury V-8, but I remember that slowpoke more than 60 years later! Keep up the great work, both of you.

Joe Darby
Via email

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matthew**litwin**

"… we're encouraging you to keep sending in those automotive-related adventures…"

Automotive Evolution

It hardly seems possible, but another lap around the sun is about to be completed. As I'm sure is the case with other like-minded enthusiasts, my celestial New Year is not marked by a solstice or equinox event, but rather the opening day of the AACA Eastern Fall Meet in Hershey, Pennsylvania. For those new to the hobby, the pilgrimage to Chocolate Town for old vehicles, parts, and memorabilia is a decades-long tradition, and I've been an eager participant since 1997, save but one due to the pandemic.

This year's multifaceted show, the second since "Tumultuous '20," could be considered a rebirth, much like solstices to our ancestors, after it was announced just over 12 months ago that the Hershey Meet dates shifted by one day. It may not look like much, but it was an epic BANG! heard by the community. As we've documented previously, vendor setup, which had traditionally occurred on Tuesday, is now (and for the foreseeable future) scheduled for Monday. The event's official opening day is now Tuesday instead of Wednesday, and so on, culminating with the long-revered car show on Friday, rather than Saturday.

We can still see the disbelief in some eyes as they stared at wooden nickels embossed with four years of future dates. Some tried to find words of encouragement; others found solace in disgruntled mumbling. Common was the question of, "What will this do to attendance?" While it has yet to be seen if the forced move is good, bad, or otherwise, it's important to remember two things: Hershey wasn't cast into a realm of distant memories, and that changes are inevitable. Though the news was perhaps shocking initially, the schedule alterations could harbor an as-yet-unseen benefit. We can relate to some degree.

Take this magazine, for instance. Like the automobiles it celebrates, *HCC* has evolved since the first issue landed on newsstands and in mailboxes in October 2004. While some features ran their course, others were added, none more recent than the previously untold stories from fellow enthusiasts through *I Was There* and *Reminiscing*. Both were met with resounding interest and contributions, though as a reader recently pointed out, it seemed as though each were destined to slowly disappear. As noted, such is not the case. A fresh batch of *I Was There* stories from the assembly lines, repair shops, and service stations have begun to arrive at our Bennington, Vermont, office, as have fond memories of first rides, long cross-country treks, and the like. All make for excellent *Reminiscing* reading.

We know there are more tales yet to be told amongst our readers, and we're encouraging you to keep sending in those automotive-related adventures of yore in detail, preferably accompanied by large-format digital or print-worthy photographs. Towed a travel trailer to Yosemite behind a Suburban? Hitched a Chris Craft to the back of the family sedan? Forced to change engines mid-trip, just to get back home? Let us know—I'm pleased to say that we're going to be rededicating space within these covers shortly.

The notion of recommitting to those features in earnest had our restless minds pondering other topics of consideration. One was the fact that, inadvertently, the pandemic's "social distance" conditions seemed to have a positive side effect on many hobbyists. The lack of social obligations left many enthusiasts with more free time to get back into the garage and start a new restoration project, revive a sleeping classic, or finish a project that had lingered in limbo. We're just starting to see some of those fresh restorations and mechanical revivals emerge, and we bet many more are still in progress. This rediscovered pride and satisfaction of rekindling a neglected relationship with vintage vehicles is stronger than ever.

To celebrate, we're launching a new feature called *Garage Time*, an homage to the *In Our/Your Garage* from our *Hemmings Sports and Exotic* past. If you're like us, the to-do list in your palace of vehicular progress still has some things to be checked off. Drop us a line—again, with large-format digital or print-worthy photographs—showing and telling us what you've been doing, and what you have planned, with your vintage steed. You won't be alone, as we'll be providing updates on both our current home and planned in-office projects.

Stories of yore and recent garage time can be sent to Hemmings Motor News, c/o Matthew Litwin, 222 Main Street, Bennington, Vermont 05201, or by email at mlitwin@hemmings.com. Perhaps our collective tales will spur a new member of this vast hobby to take a deeper dive in vintage vehicle fun, too.

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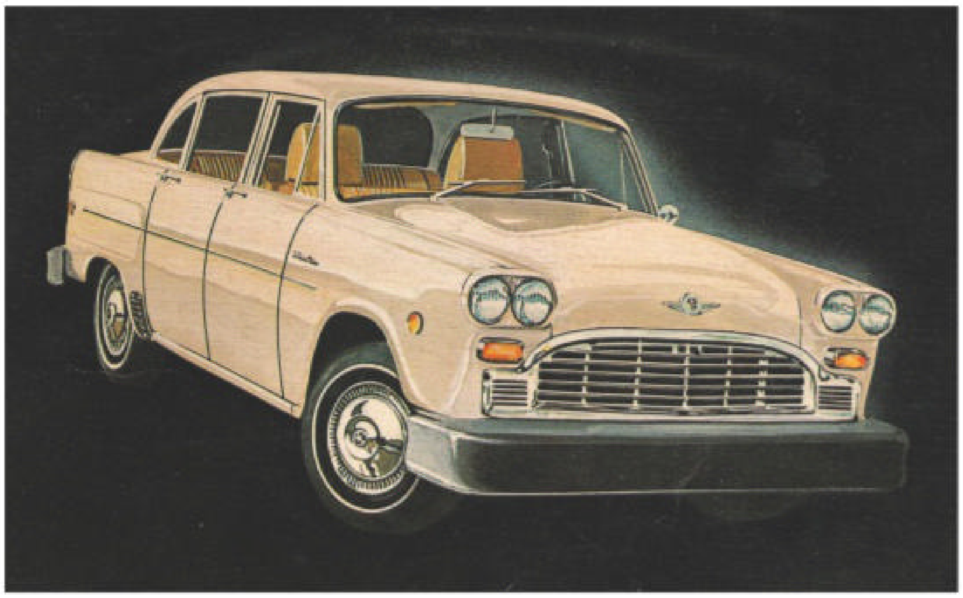
"The lines were long and flowing; however, the first thing you noticed is how low they were."

Not Stepping Down

In case you're wondering, the title of today's column is not about me stepping down from my position here at good old *HCC*. Rather, it has to do with the cars that never joined the "step-down" movement. In other words, it's the handful of cars that never incorporated Hudson's innovative step-down construction technique.



You'll recall that Hudson's first post-World War II complete redesign was for the 1948 model year. It included sedans, coupes, and a convertible, all boasting an aerodynamic body shape. The lines were long and flowing; however, the first thing you noticed is how low they were. To people of that era, it seemed impossible someone could sit inside the new Hudsons comfortably; surely your hat would get crushed and you'd have to drive stooped forward. But Hudson's body and chassis engineers managed to achieve a low cabin with plenty of headroom. The trick they came up with was, essentially, to weld the floor panel to the underside of the chassis frame rails rather than the top. This allowed them to drop the seats several inches, which in turn meant the roofline could be lowered without loss of headroom.

It was a major styling coup. The new Hudsons were the lowest family cars in America by far, at a time when "longer, lower, wider" were considered big advantages.

One side benefit: Occupants felt safer because the impression they got upon entering the car was that they were stepping down *into* the chassis. They could imagine frame rails encircling them for safety. It was a comforting feeling.

But the most significant benefit was in handling—the new Hudson Step-Downs outhandled every other full-sized car on the road. This fact was soon noticed by stock car racers around the country and before you could say, "So long, sucker," Hudsons were racking up race wins by the score.

So, it might seem strange that a handful of cars never switched over to step-down design, while one or two significant others eventually did, though years later than most. One latecomer was Rambler. When the company redesigned the Rambler line for 1956, it didn't include a step-down floor, which was odd because it would have helped them offer even more room in what was the roomiest Rambler yet. I knew its designer, Ed Anderson, but never thought to ask him why that was; I wasn't smart enough back then to think of it. That basic body remained in production through 1962. The 1963 models had a step-down floor.

Studebaker never joined the step-down club, but in this case, we know why: After 1956, the company lacked the financial resources to do a complete redesign of its cars. It managed to debut the sharp new Lark for 1959 by shortening the front and rear of its family sedan. After that came periodic updates and refinements, but no all-new line of family cars. However, Studebaker did its best to turn a disadvantage into a product plus; in advertisements it talked about the Lark's "sweep-out floors", which, the ads said, were easier to clean because one could simply sweep them out. The step-down design on other cars meant you had to use a vacuum cleaner or a dustpan to gather up dirt from the floor.

And then there's Checker. The gutsy little automaker from Kalamazoo not only never embraced the step-down design, but in terms of styling, it never left the 1950s! The final Checker production designs debuted for 1956 and featured "virtually flat floors" for ease of entry and exit, and for better leg and foot room. In Checker's case, I'd love to know if the decision to forgo the step-down design was actually for the sake of roominess, or because management was reluctant to use a technology it felt might be just a passing fad. After all, since the end of WWII, the price of tooling for a new car had soared, and didn't look like it was ever coming down, so Checker management knew its latest design would probably be in production for many years. As it turned out, the final Checker design was in production for more than a quarter of a century. However, modern styling techniques weren't all that important in taxicabs; roominess and ease of entry and egress were key, along with maximum comfort. In that regard, Checker was ideal. Just not "modern."

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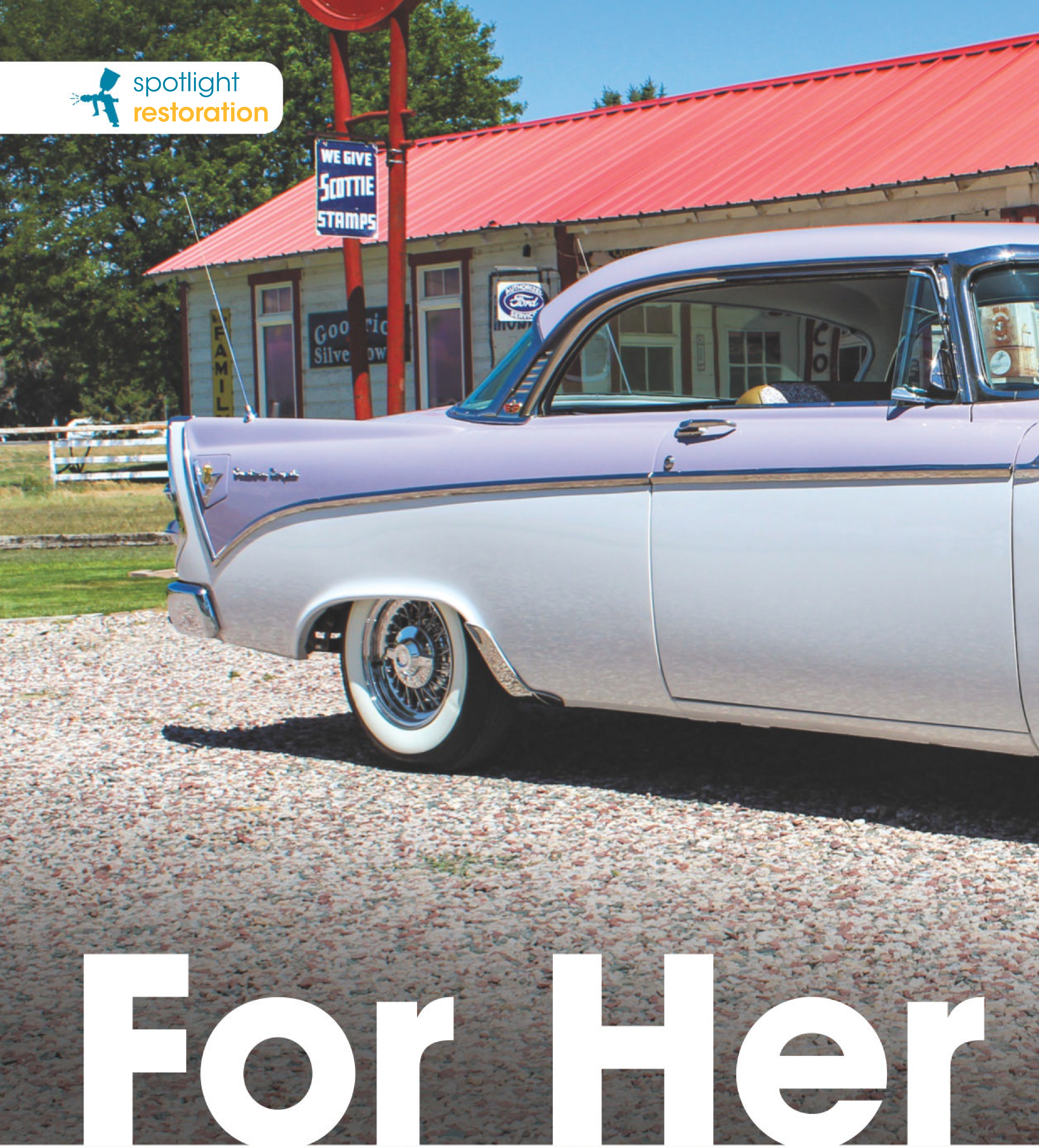
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Restoring a 1956 Dodge La Femme, originally designed to appeal to women buyers

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM BLACK • RESTORATION PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT MILLER

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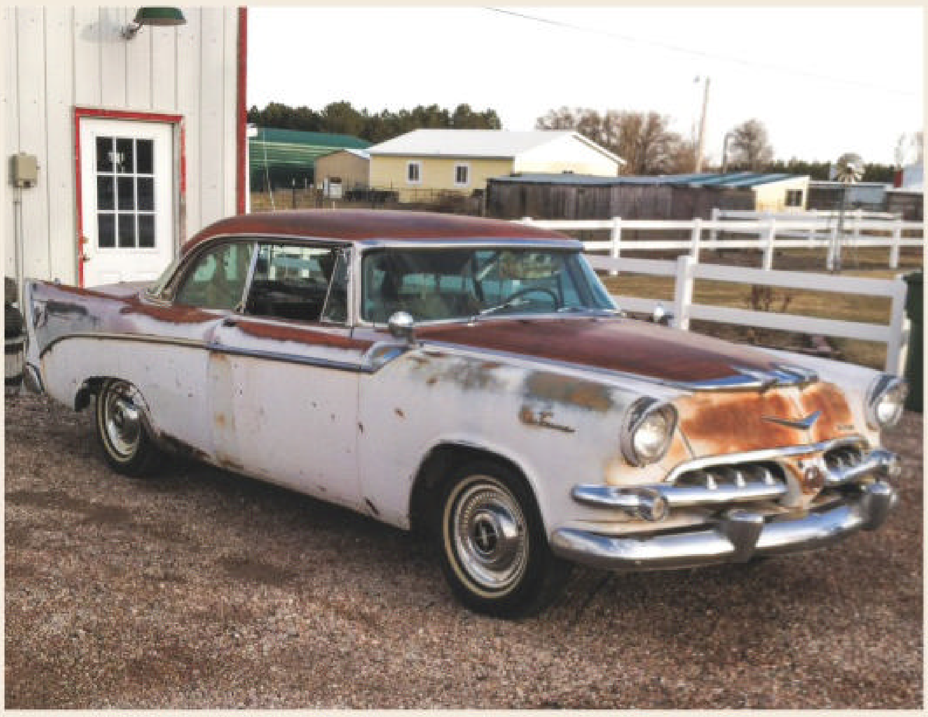
During the Fifties, Chrysler's marketing department observed that more women were taking an interest in automobiles. Aside from the type of car, their opinions on which color car to buy were becoming part of the decision-making process. As a result, Chrysler built two show cars in 1954, named Le Comte and La Comtesse.

Each concept was developed from the division's Newport hardtop body and given a clear plastic roof over the passenger compartment. While the Le Comte was designed using masculine colors, the La Comtesse was painted Dusty Rose and Pigeon Grey to convey femininity. Favorable responses from the automotive press encouraged Chrysler to continue development of the La Comtesse concept in an attempt to make a connection with female customers.

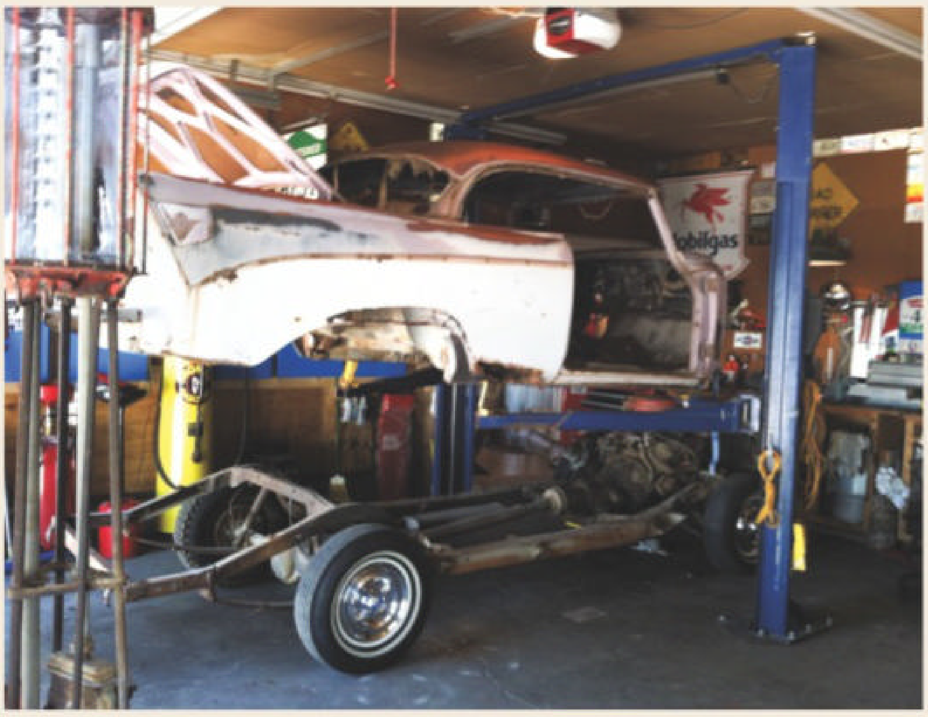
From the Chrysler La Comtesse concept came the Dodge La Femme. It was unveiled in 1955 as a "spring special" version of the division's Custom Royal Lancer two-door hardtop. Its exterior was painted an attractive two-tone scheme of Sapphire White and Heather Rose, complemented by special gold-colored "La Femme" scripts that replaced the standard "Custom Royal Lancer" scripts on the front fenders.

Interiors also received special La Femme upgrades and features. First, the upholstery featured a special tapestry material with pink rosebuds on a pale silver-pink background and pale pink vinyl trim. Included was a keystone-shaped, pink calfskin handbag—color coordinated with the special upholstery—that could be stowed in a special compartment on the back of the passenger seat.

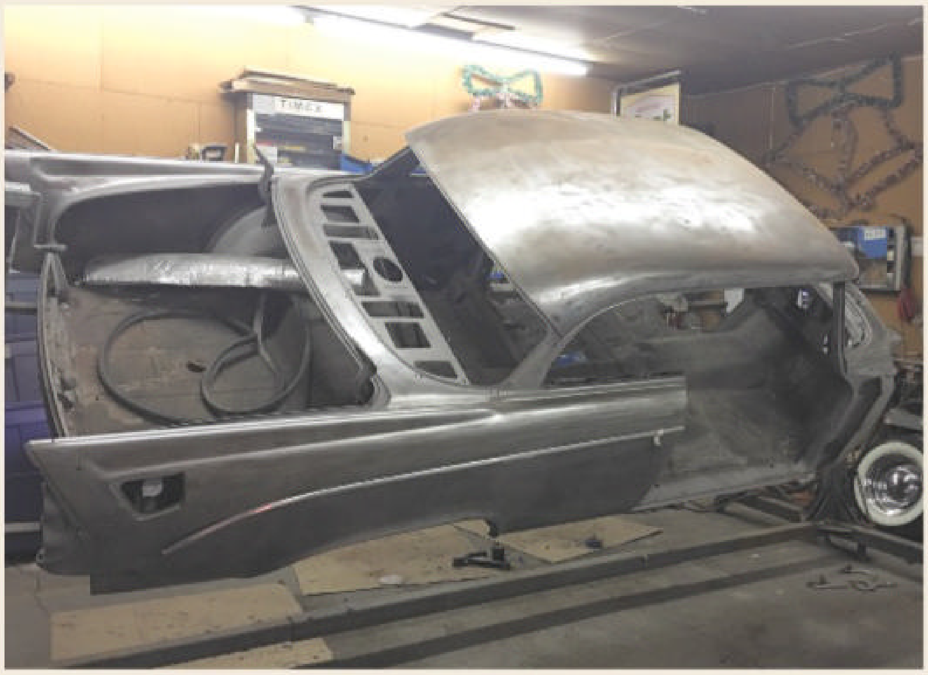
Each handbag was outfitted with a coordinated set of accessories, including a lipstick case, cigarette case, cigarette lighter, face-powder compact, comb, and change purse, all made of either faux-tortoiseshell plastic with gold-tone



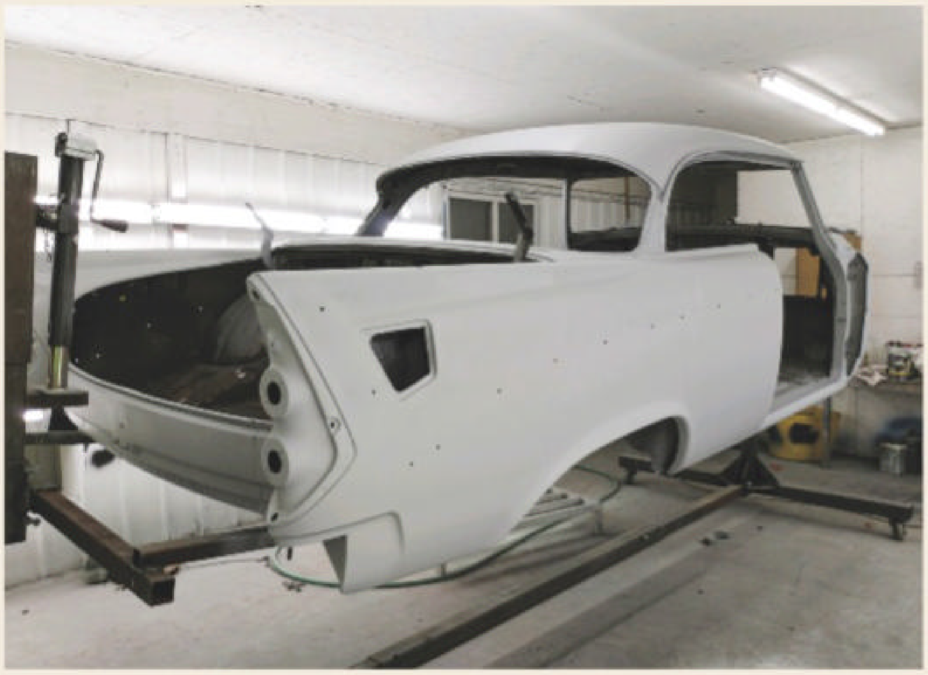
The Dodge was mostly rust-free and complete but in sad shape, especially the interior — nearly every component was unusable.



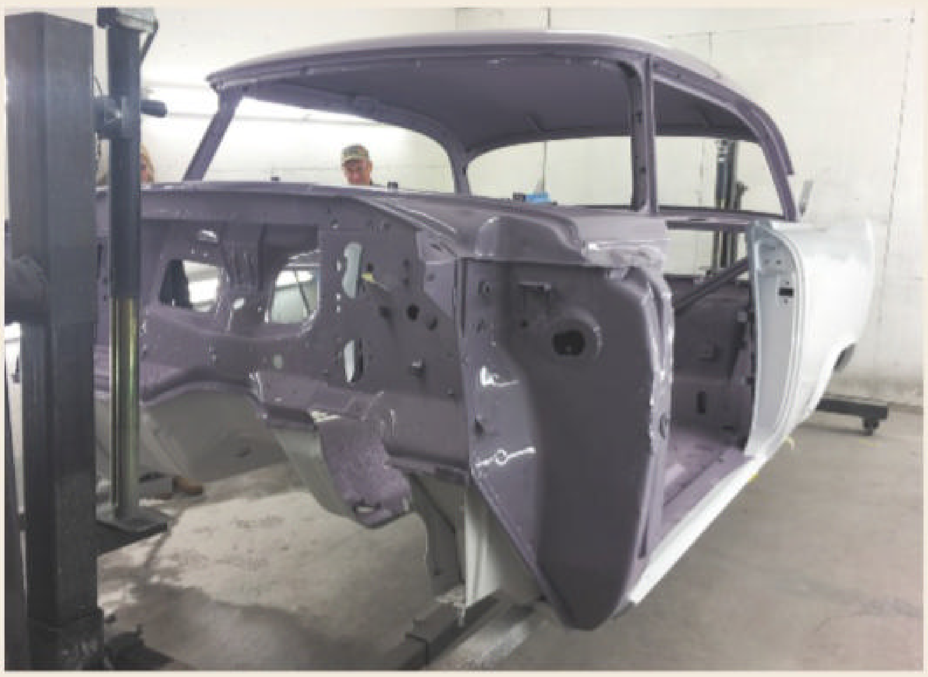
Disassembly started with separating the body from the chassis and sending out the engine for a rebuild.



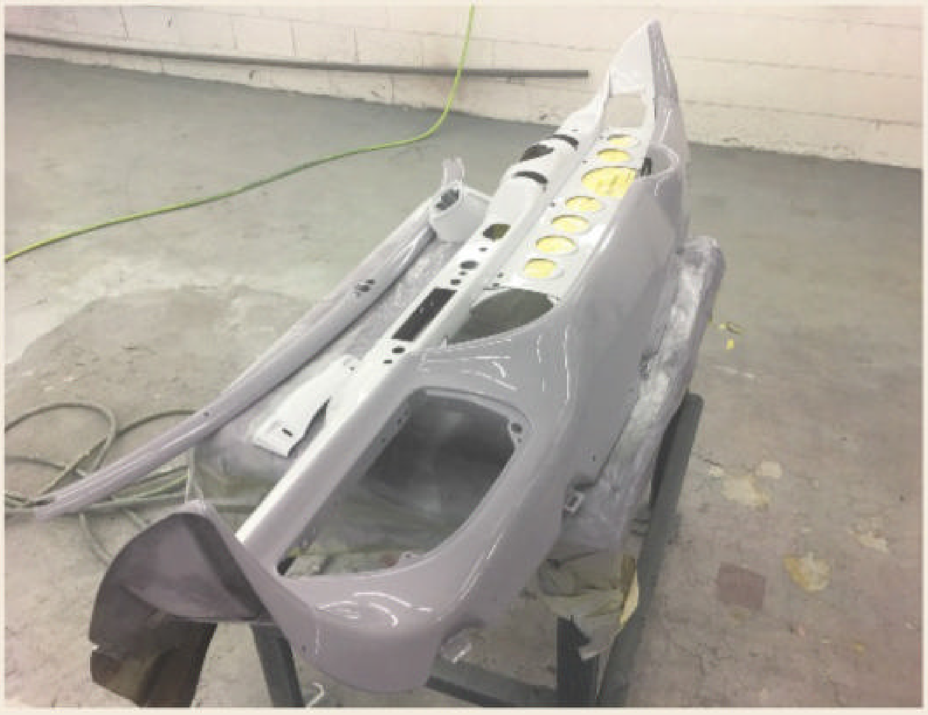
The body was stripped to bare metal and deemed to be in good condition overall with only minor rust repair required in the lower rocker panels.



LeRoy Sanders of Sanders Auto Body in LaGrange, Wyoming, handled all the body and paint work. Once the sheetmetal repair was complete, it was sealed and an epoxy primer was sprayed.



The body was then repainted in the factory two-tone Misty Orchid and Regal Orchid using a two-stage urethane paint system. It was then wet sanded and polished.

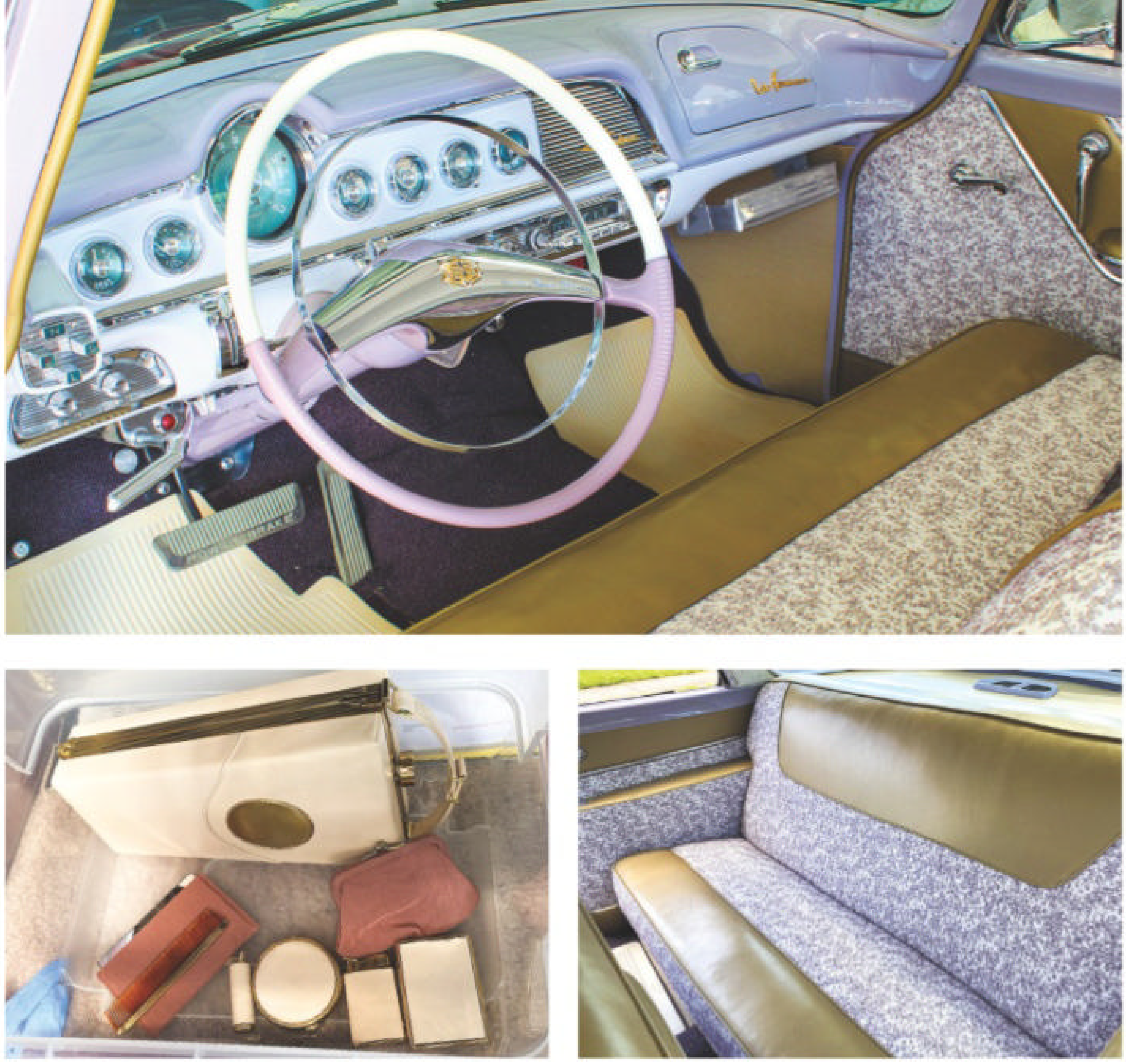


Interior trim and the dash panel were also painted in the correct matching exterior colors.

metal, or pink calfskin and gold-tone metal. The ensemble was designed and made by Evans, a maker of women's fine garments and accessories in Chicago. Additionally, on the back of the driver's seat was a compartment that contained a raincoat, rain bonnet, and umbrella, all made from vinyl and patterned to match the rosebud interior fabric. Marketing brochures stated that the car was made "By Special Appointment to Her Majesty... the American Woman."

La Femme returned for 1956, accompanied with letters to dealers from Dodge's marketing department calling the special model a "stunning success." For its second season on the market, Dodge replaced the Heather Rose and Sapphire White paint scheme with a Misty Orchid and Regal Orchid. Changes to the interior featured La Femme-only seat patterns, headliner, interior paint, and carpet.

Seat coverings were made of a heavy white cloth with random, organic-style patterns of short lavender and purple loops, in a manner similar to loop-pile carpeting. The headliner cloth was heavy white fabric, with random splashes of gold paint, while the carpeting was loop pile with shades of lavender and purple. Also changed were the boxes behind



The 1955 La Femme came with a pink keystone-shaped calfskin purse that coordinated with the interior, as well as a matching raincoat, rain bonnet, and umbrella. The purse could be stowed in a compartment on the back of the passenger seat and included a lipstick case, cigarette case, cigarette lighter, face-powder compact, comb, and change purse. The '56 La Femme (featured) dropped the purse but still included the rain gear.

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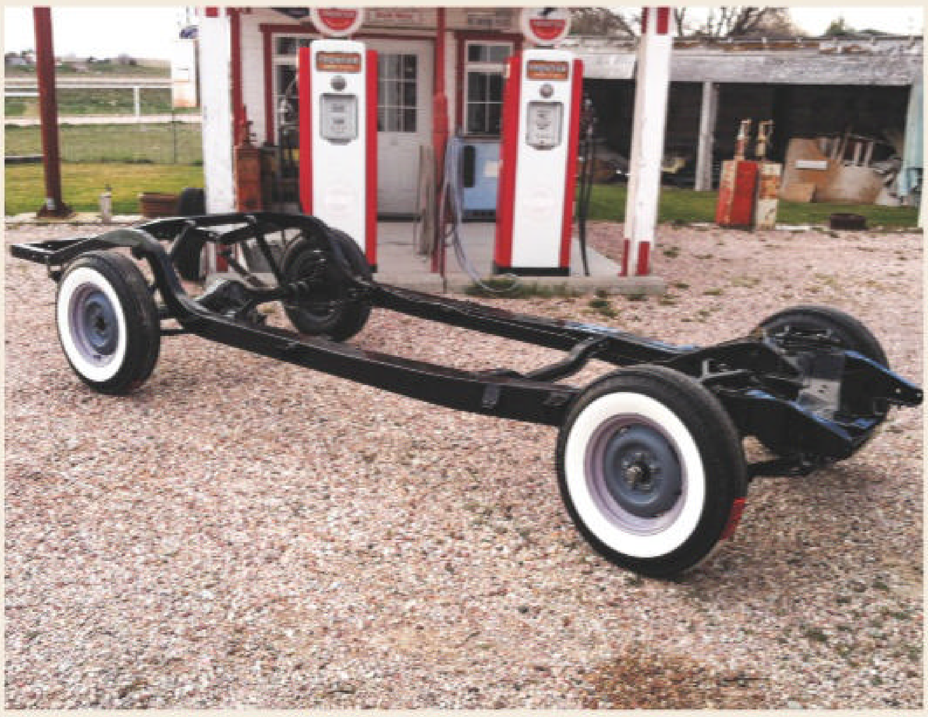
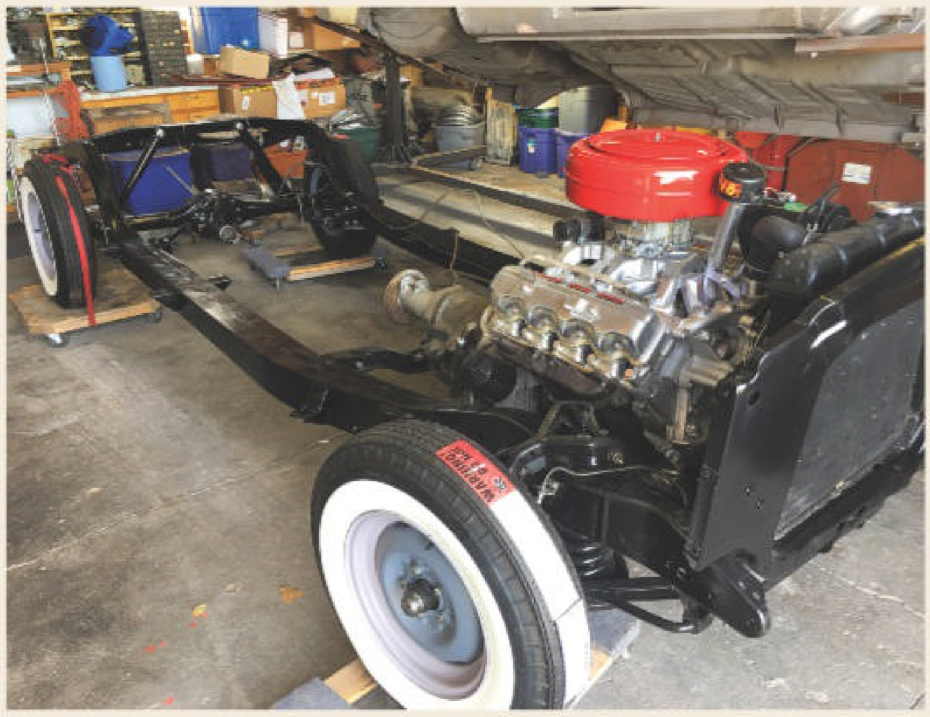
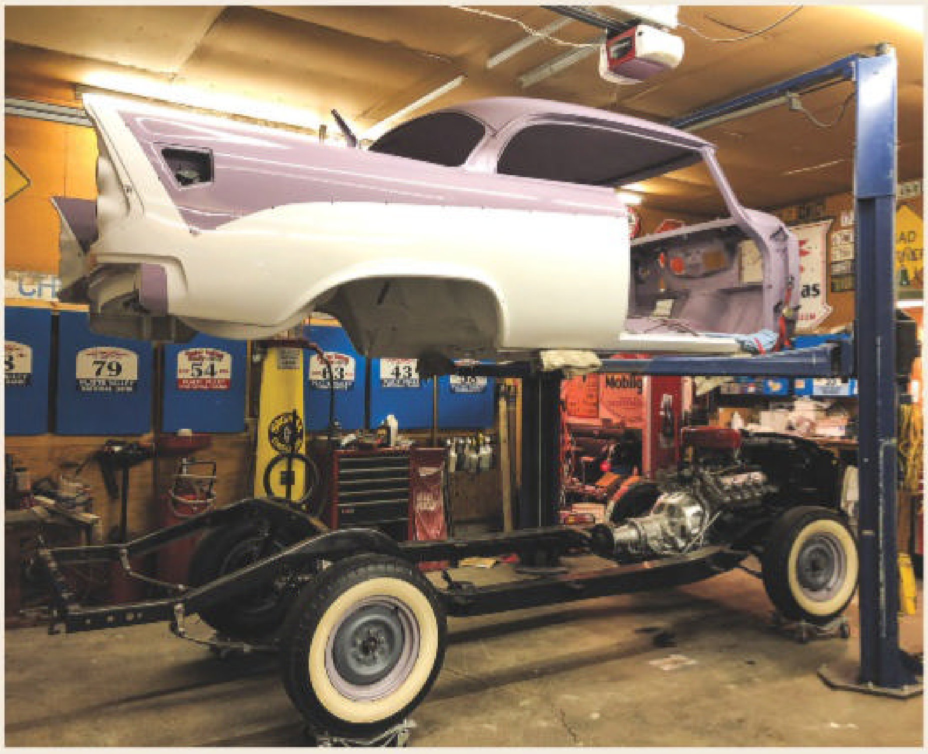


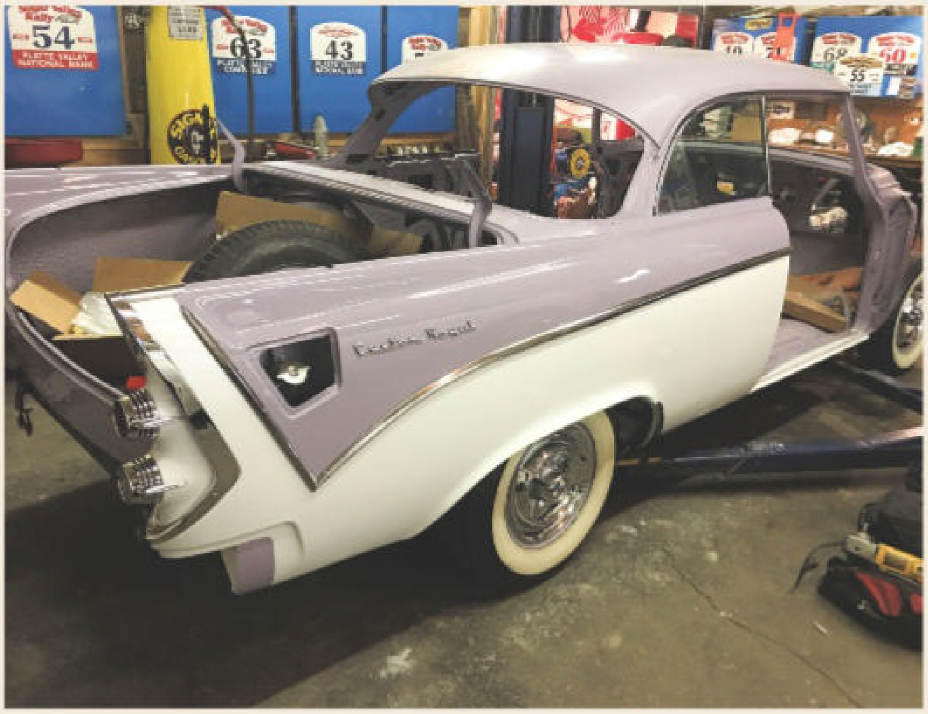
Scott stripped and painted the frame and rebuilt or replaced all the individual chassis components.



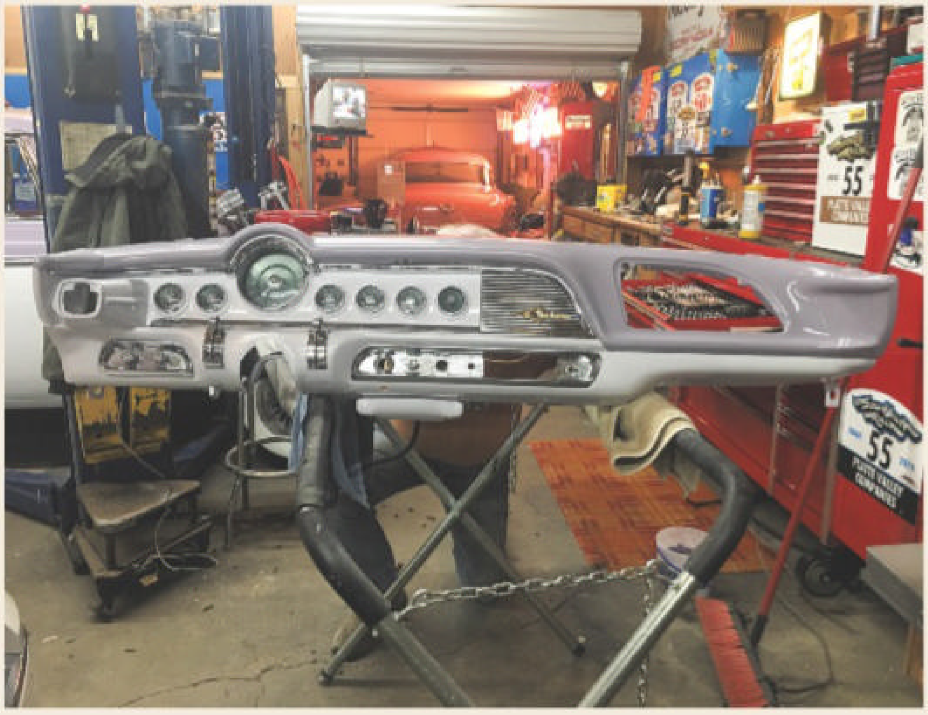
The completed drivetrain, including the rebuilt 315-cu.in. engine, was installed back in the chassis.



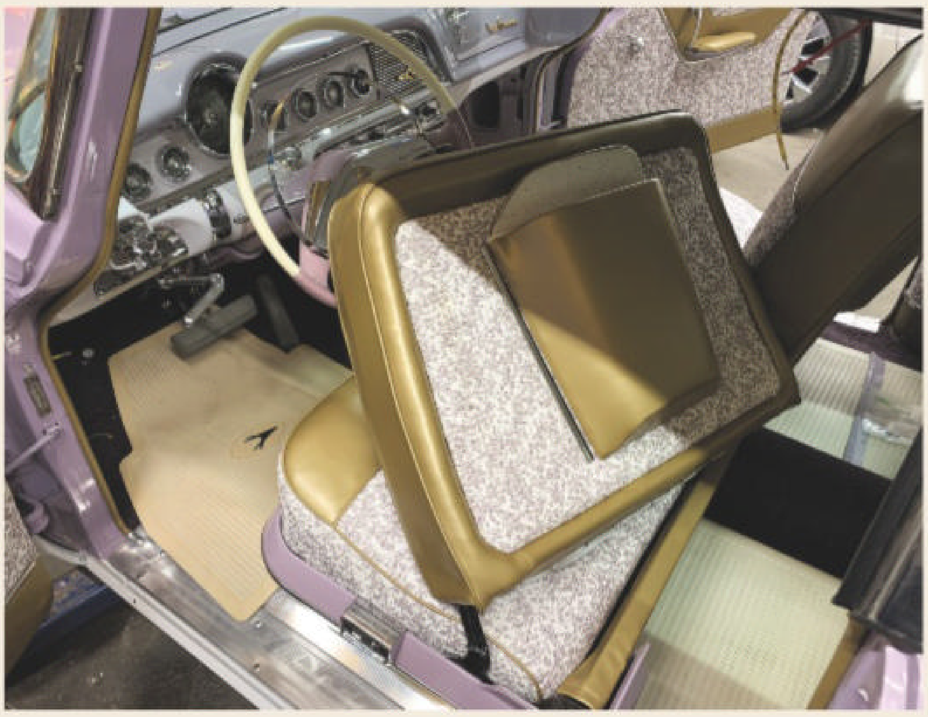
The refreshed body and chassis are once again reunited.



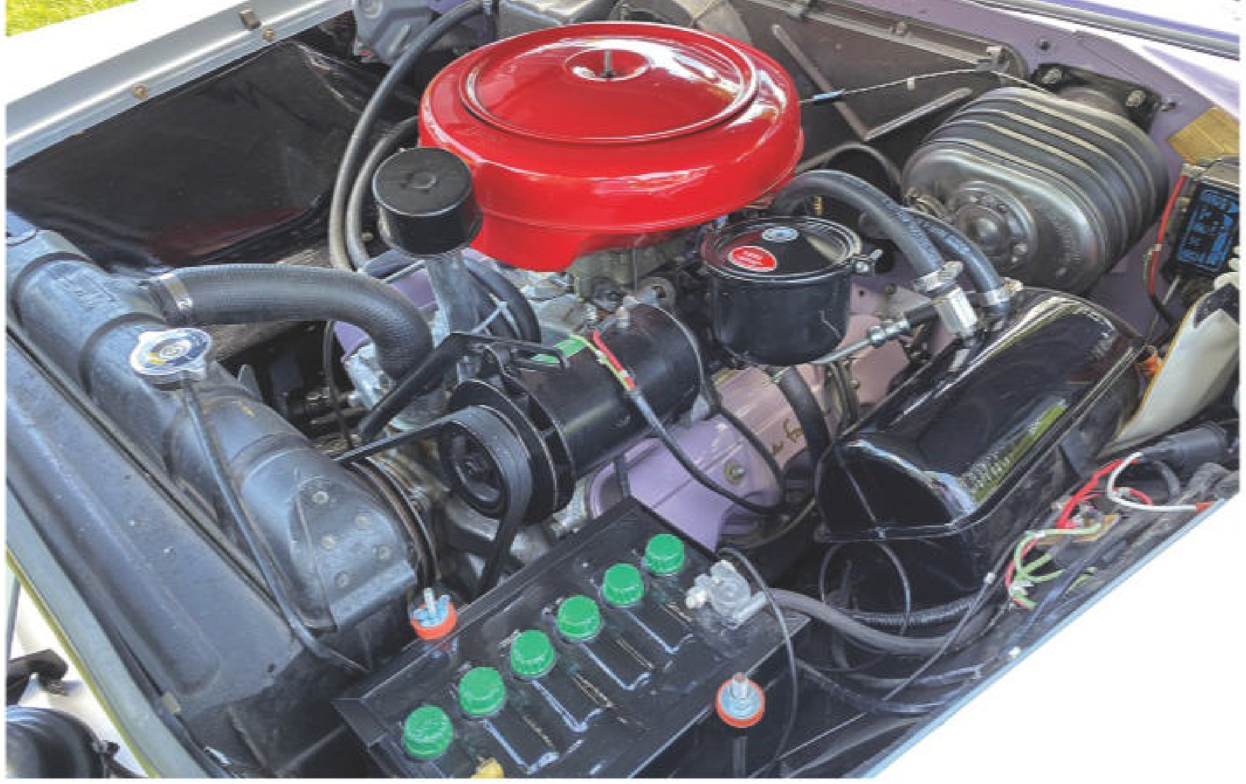
Final assembly is underway here with miscellaneous trim and quarter glass already installed.



Scott spent many hours detailing and restoring the gauges, dash, and trim components.



Most of the custom La Femme interior has been installed, including the unique accessory boxes that are mounted to the seatbacks.



This La Femme is powered by Dodge's 230-hp, 315-cu.in. V-8 with a two-speed PowerFlite automatic. Scott took some liberty by painting the valve covers to match the body color.

the seats, done to accommodate a new raincoat, rain bonnet, and umbrella that were provided. Both boxes were identical in design because the special purse was discontinued.

"I have known about these cars since 1988 when I purchased a car magazine featuring the La Femmes," Scott Miller of Mitchell, Nebraska, recalls. "A friend of mine purchased this 1956 version and planned to restore it for his wife. I told him if he ever wanted to sell it, I would be interested as it would be a great present for Hope, my wife."

Twenty-five years passed before Scott's friend finally contacted him about the La Femme, having decided to sell. They even negotiated a price, but after a couple of weeks, the owner changed his mind; his wife loved the car and didn't want to part with it. Fate would eventually intervene, though.

"Two years later his wife's health was failing, so he contacted me again and agreed to sell the La Femme at our previously agreed price. I got the phone call when I was having lunch with a group of friends; we all pooled our money so I could pay for the car before he changed his mind again." This was in January of 2015, and Scott immediately drove the seven miles to the seller's home, but he soon found another challenge standing between him and the Dodge. "The road to his house was covered in snow-drifts, so I had to walk the last half mile to finalize the purchase."

The La Femme Scott purchased was built on January 12, 1956, at Dodge's main factory in Hamtramck, Michigan, and was then sold through Lambert Bezner Motor Company in Muenster, Texas. Aside from the standard La Femme equipment, the car was delivered with a 315-cu.in. V-8, PowerFlite two-speed automatic transmission, power steering, power brakes, power seats, AM pushbutton radio with dual antennas, windshield washers, tinted glass, day/night rear view mirror, dual outside mirrors, dual exhausts, bumper guards, and 3.54:1 final drive ratio.

Though the car was mostly intact, save for the missing umbrella, it was still in need of a complete restoration. Scott

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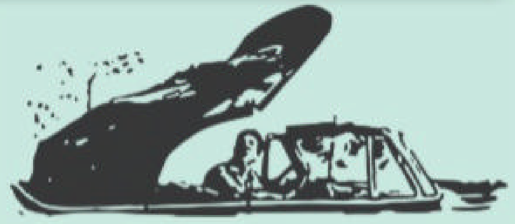
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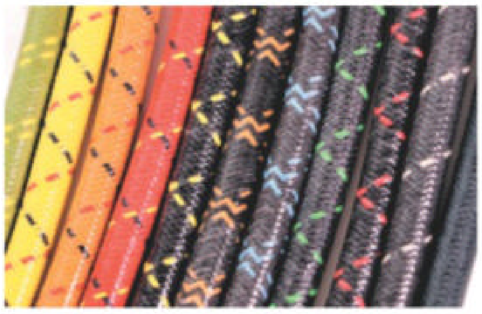

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When I first heard about this car, I thought it would be great to restore one for my wife. The seller is still a great friend of mine, and we took the finished car to his home last summer for him to see. We let him take it for a drive and he even offered to buy it back, though we declined. It may have been a difficult restoration but it's a car you will never see at another show. The fact that 9 out of 10 enthusiasts have never heard of one means that we will always get to tell the story.

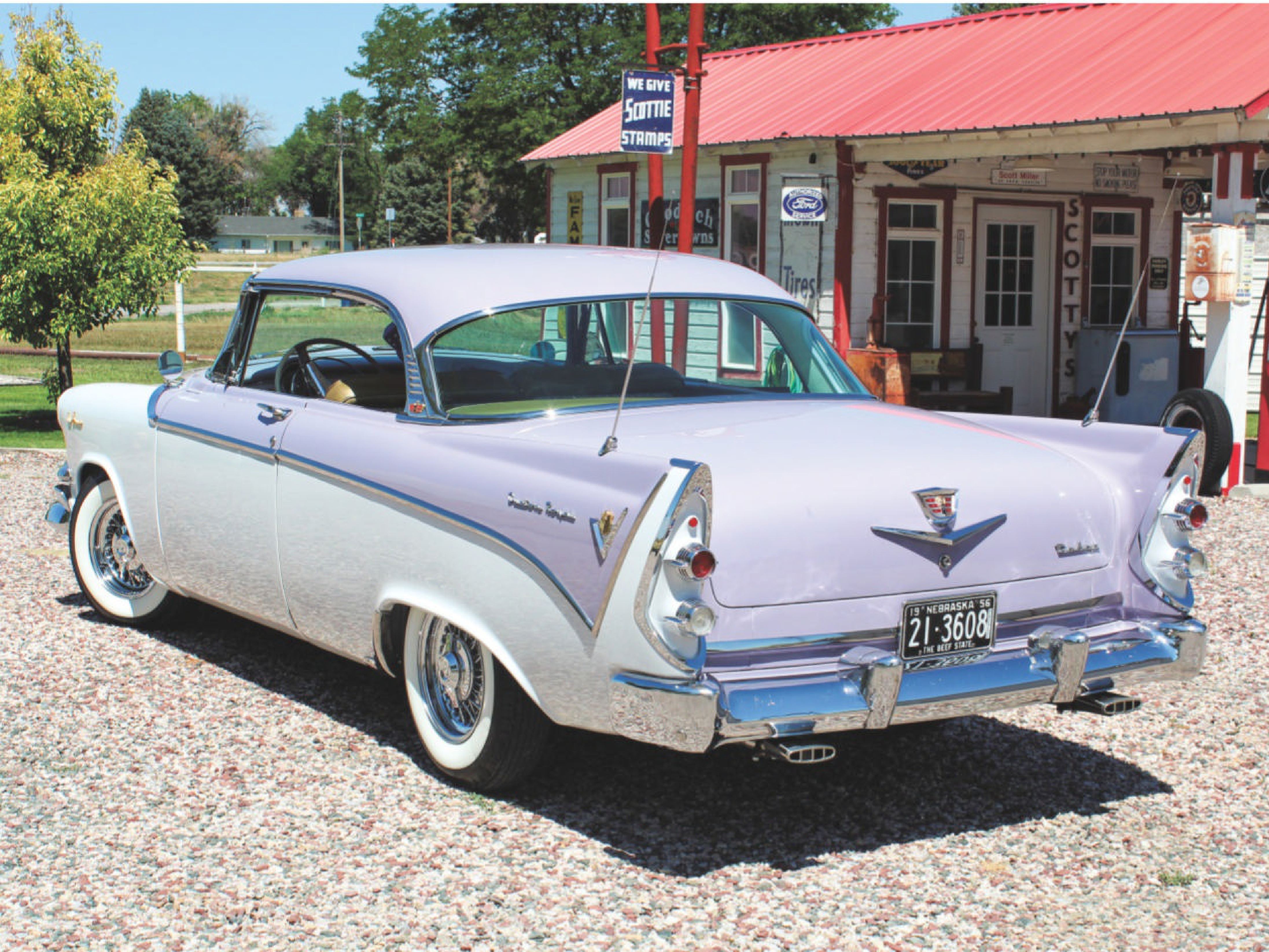
—Scott and Hope Miller

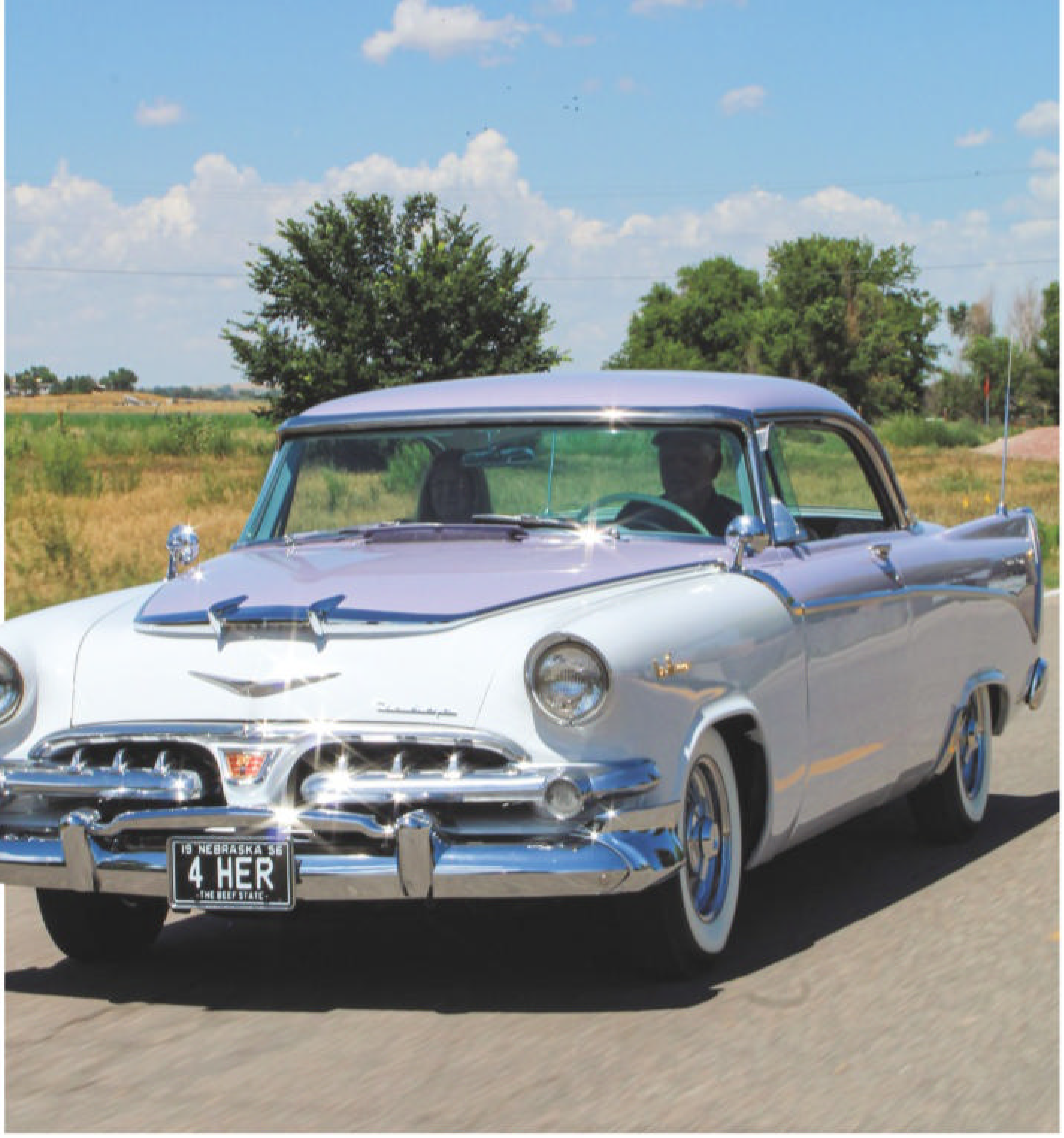
relays, "The car had a rough life: One of the previous owners told me stories of him and a friend tearing up the country roads. We weren't going to take anything to chance during the project."

Together, Scott and Hope started the restoration with a complete disassembly and stripped the car to bare metal, after which the Dodge was taken to LeRoy Sanders of Sanders Auto Body in LaGrange, Wyoming, for all the body and paint work. After all the sheetmetal repair was completed, the body was sealed and epoxy primer applied. The body was then carefully repainted in the factory-matched two-tone original colors using a two-stage urethane paint system. Wet sanding and polishing followed.

As mentioned, this La Femme was powered by Dodge's poly-head version of its 315-cu.in. V-8. Fitted with a Carter four-barrel carburetor and boasting 8.0:1 compression, the engine was capable of 230 hp and 316 lb-ft of torque. It was soon discovered to be a numbers-matching powerplant, and was rebuilt to factory specifications by Jeff's Machine Company in Alliance, Nebraska. The same facility also rebuilt the PowerFlite transmission.

Meanwhile, Scott worked on the frame, which was stripped and repainted. Its suspension components—including shocks, bushings, brakes, wheel cylinders, brake lines, master cylinder, and power brake booster—were also rebuilt or replaced by Scott. To finish out the chassis, he chose to purchase a set of 15 x 6-inch OEM-style wire wheels—a factory option that year—from Wheel Vintiques. They were then wrapped with G70 x 15 American Classic whitewall tires from Coker Tire.





This La Femme rides on reproductions of the optional 15 x 6-inch OEM-style wire wheels with G70 x 15 American Classic white walls.

The engine, push-button transmission, and refinished body were then reunited with the chassis, allowing Scott and Hope to continue the reassembly process by mounting the bumpers and trim, along with new wiring harnesses front to back.

"I found an NOS windshield and all-new rubber seals and grommets," Scott recalls. "I used all-new glass except for the rear window, which was not available as a reproduction."

Finally, it was time to work on the interior, which Scott assumed would be very challenging due to the unique one-year colors and fabrics. "Surprisingly, I was able to get all the correct seat material and interior door panels from SMS Auto Fabrics out of Canby, Oregon. They even made me a new set of accessory boxes that mounted to the seatbacks," Scott says.

The new upholstery was sewn and installed by Bob's Upholstery in Fort Morgan, Colorado. Gene Carwin, the owner, had enough material left over to make a matching tire cover for the trunk. A new headliner was also installed, though the task was managed by Woody's Upholstery in Mitchell, South Dakota. The final touches made to the interior include the installation of a restored steering wheel, done by Quality Restorations of San Diego, California, and restored gauges and dash refurbished by the Millers themselves.

The seven-year restoration was completed in May 2021 and the Dodge La Femme spent the winter on display at a car museum in Kearney, Nebraska. "This was no easy car to restore as locating parts was extremely difficult," Scott admits. "I even recall finding some NOS emblems in Australia. Bottom line: if I found something, I just bought it and hoped for the best."

Because the La Femme was an option package available for only two years, its total numbers were never broken out from Dodge's production figures. Research suggests fewer than 2,500 were made over the two-year period. At least 40 known examples of the 1955 version remain, and only 20 from '56. "I have restarted the old La Femme Registry online and can only account for approximately 30 remaining for both years," Scott attests. "There could be more that have never publicly surfaced. We even have one of each in Sweden, Great Britain, and South Africa. It's one of the rarest cars around. We are fortunate to own this 1956 and a 1955 La Femme that we purchased in original condition in 2017."

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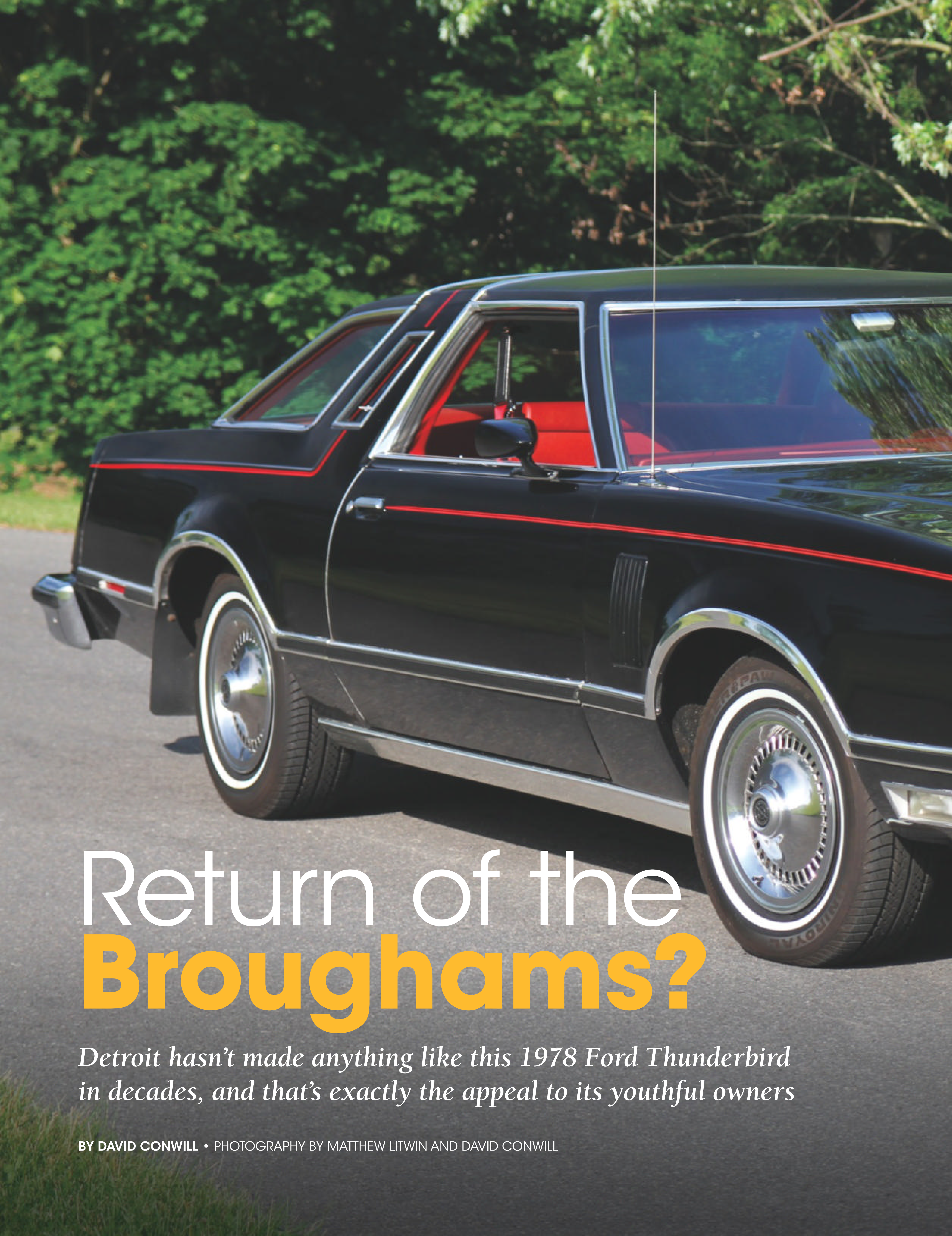

Return of the **Broughams?**

Detroit hasn't made anything like this 1978 Ford Thunderbird in decades, and that's exactly the appeal to its youthful owners

BY DAVID CONWILL • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW LITWIN AND DAVID CONWILL

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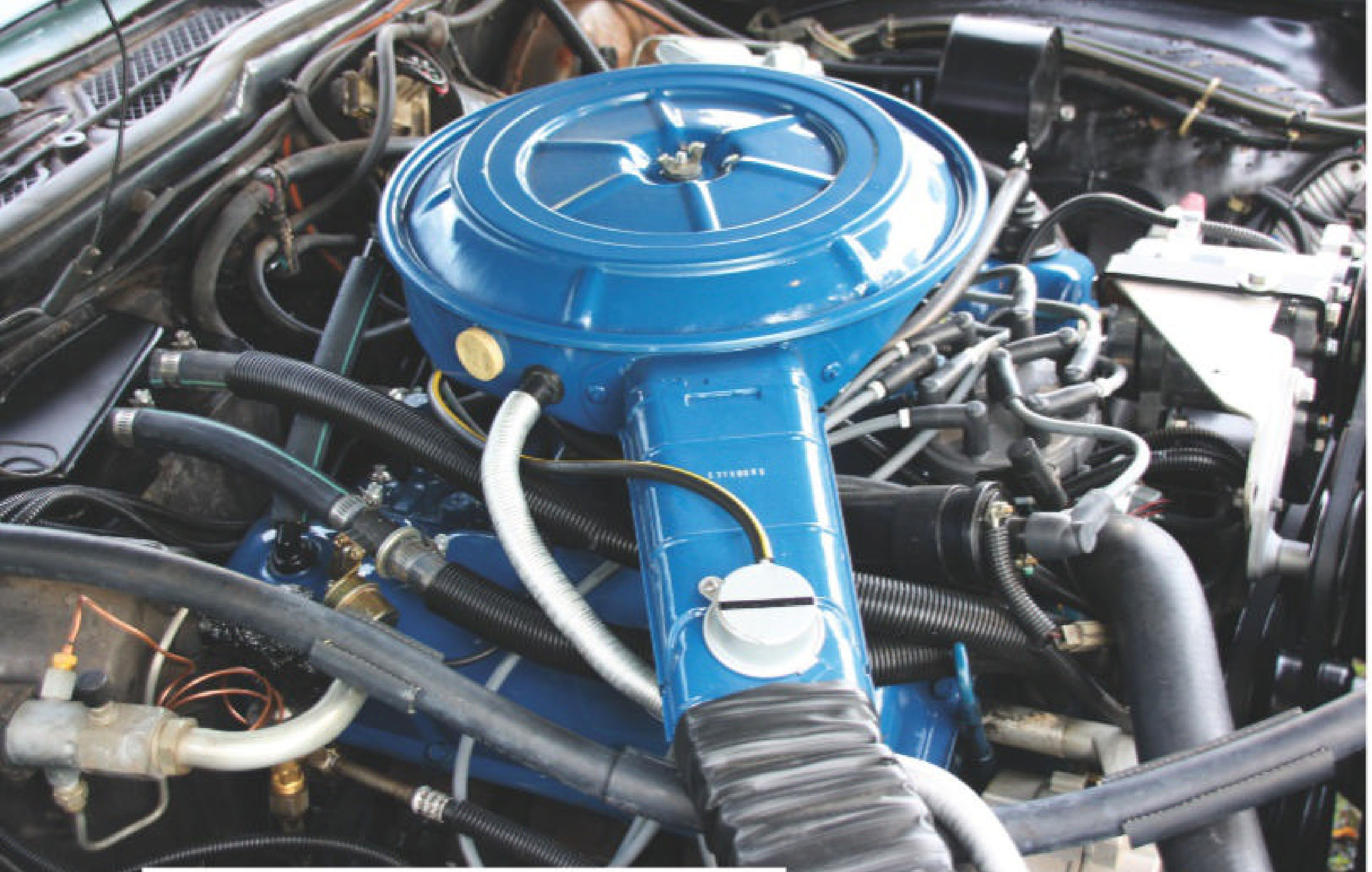
When Anthony Cicero was a youth, the now-37-year-old Staten Islander started noticing that there was more to the automotive landscape than the generic, greige, wind-tunnel-shaped transportation that made up the majority of cars crowding U.S. roads. Back before "Euro" styling stripped most of the ornament and



Underhood, where the factory paint didn't hold up well, Anthony carefully selected modern paints in the correct colors to preserve a stock look—despite having installed an Edelbrock four-barrel setup.

sculpturing from American cars in the '80s and '90s, he realized, cars still looked like cars. Even his father owned one of those distinctive automobiles, which helped to inform him that their beauty was more than skin deep.

"My dad had a '79 Bonneville," he recalls. "Those were great-running cars. Very comfortable and they had creature comforts like air conditioning, even then."

The ones he was seeing then were mostly winter beaters, living out the tail end of their lives in ignominy—but he recognized what they must have been like when new and started seeking out a '70s car while still in high school.

That first car was a '72 Mustang, and he's still got it; even then, though, it was a little too old and a little too sporty to completely satisfy that yearning for a true "Seventies car." It did, at least, provide an entrance to old-car ownership as a whole, and the '60s-style tech that underpinned the mechanical systems of '70s cars. It was also an introduction to the merits of vintage Ford products, as at that point, Anthony was working at a Chevrolet dealership.

While working at the dealer, he says, "I used to get a lot of flak for buying a Ford." But he notes, "I couldn't even touch a Camaro or a Mopar of that era unless it was a rot-box. When I bought my '72 Mustang, there was nobody into those."

Late first-generation Mustangs have certainly taken off in popularity since that time, but Anthony's next move was to start seeking out a properly appealing '70s car. Something that wasn't a pony car, but instead one of the massive and comfortable personal cars of the era.

The Thunderbird probably invented the personal-luxury segment when it went to a four-seat arrangement for the 1958 model year. It was joined in relatively short order by the Pontiac Grand Prix and the Buick Riviera—the latter being perhaps its most significant challenger. By the mid-1960s, the concept of luxury for the everyman had even crept into cars with ordinary proportions: looking at you, Ford LTD and Chevrolet Caprice. Even Ford couldn't resist further entries into the growing field—possibly jealous of the success of the Grand Prix's younger sibling, the Chevrolet Monte Carlo—changing the Mercury Cougar from a Mustang alternate to something more Thunderbird-like for 1974 and then making the XR-7 coupe essentially a badge-engineered Thunderbird in 1977.

"A neighbor had a '77 Cougar," Anthony recalls, "which is kind of the same car, just with a different nose. I just knew there was never anything like that before, and there will never be anything like that again."

That made a big impression on Anthony, pushing him further into the 1970s Ford camp. "I was always looking for one—preferably a '77 to '79 Thunderbird." One day, about three years ago, he says, "A friend told me about a local listing online. It was right on the way home from work and was definitely worth checking out."

What awaited him, in a rather cave-like cinderblock garage, was this car. It had been sitting for around seven years at that point, waiting for its owner to recover from a long illness and deal with some accumulated maintenance items. Unfortunately, by this time it had become clear that a quick recovery was not in the cards and the owner's son was selling the car for him.

"It had 54,000 miles. It was all original but had some rust on the brake lines and transmission lines, and it needed some maintenance items like gaskets and seals. I was amazed at how clean the body, the doors, and the trunk all were."

It was also a nicely equipped car, finished in black with black Valino-grain vinyl trim, and a split-bench front seat finished in Russet red cloth and vinyl. Further touches included dual accent paint stripes, whitewall radials, cornering lamps, the bumper-protection group, the appearance-protection group, remote-control, color-keyed racing mirrors, tinted glass, rocker-panel moldings, and wide bodyside

moldings. One of 2,457 black Thunderbirds with a red interior built for 1978, it's not terribly rare, but as a survivor… Well, when's the last time you saw one?

Anthony knew he'd found the right car. A deal was struck, and he took the car home to attend to its needs, replacing the rusted steel lines and dried-up gaskets. He also swapped out the original Motorcraft 2150 two-barrel and its cast-iron intake atop the 351M V-8 for an Edelbrock four-barrel and matching aluminum manifold—which he painted Ford blue to help blend in under the stock air cleaner. He also did some engine-bay touchups, rectifying the badly flaking original paint found under hood. Aside from that and an exchange of the bulky, original York air-conditioning compressor for a newer aftermarket unit, the car is almost entirely true—down to the paint—to the way it rolled off the Chicago assembly line on September 2, 1977.

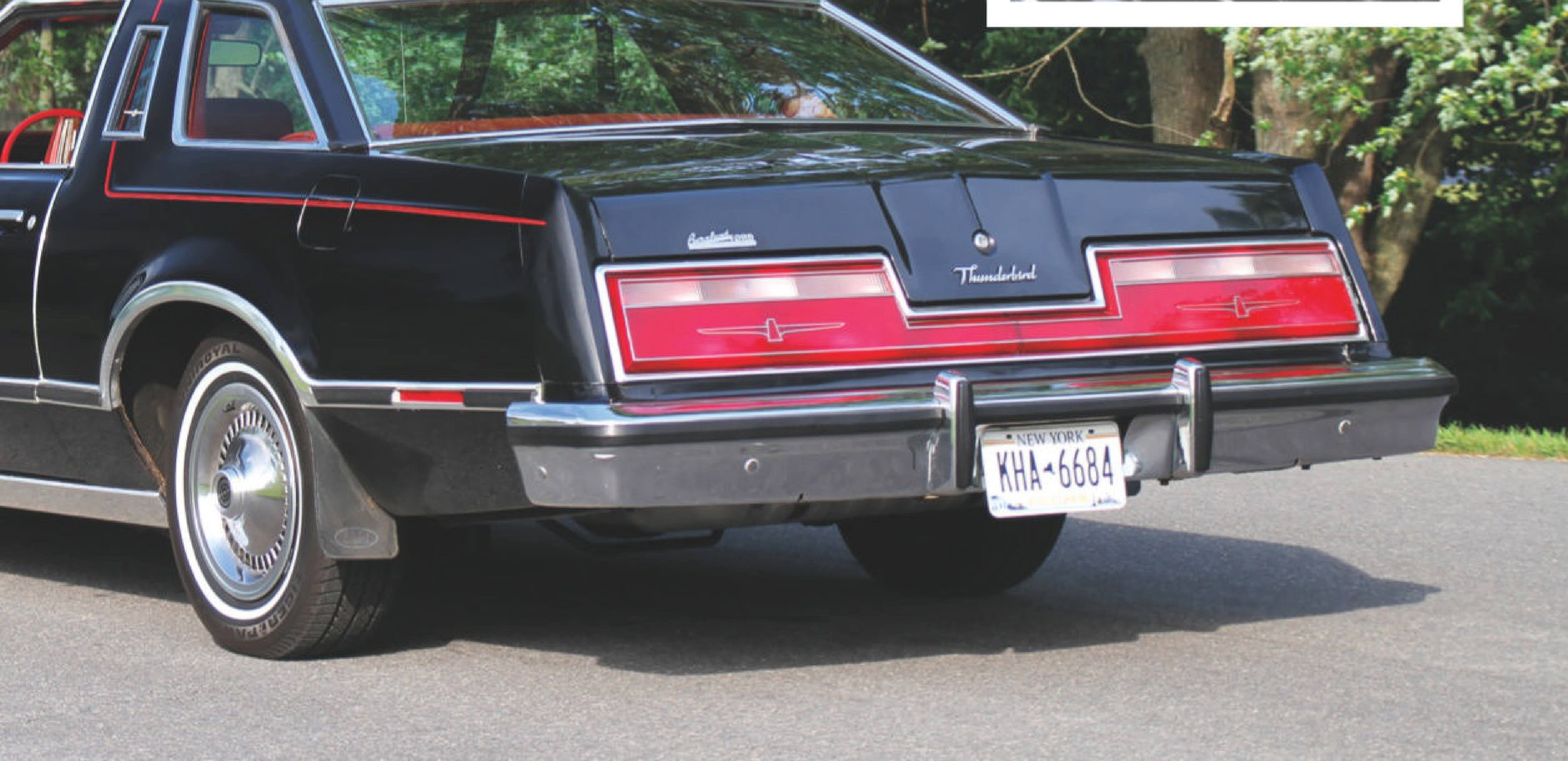
That's particularly remarkable when you consider that the Thunderbird's original home was in New Jersey, which is not a state necessarily favorable to long-term survival of older cars. Of course, aside from its preservation, the Thunderbird is somewhat remarkable in and of itself. Visually, most people find the front-and-rear vinyl roofs to be noteworthy. Ford even teased them in an advertisement, captioned "lightning strikes twice." Far less obvious, but of perhaps even greater interest to technical types, the car was also ordered with a 2.50:1-geared Traction-Lok rear axle behind the FMX automatic. One might be tempted to credit the limited-slip unit to wintertime driving ambitions on the part of the first owner, but if that's the case, it appears they never followed through, thus preserving the T-bird's body to the present day.

To folks who weren't around when they were new, the non-sterility of what critics scoff at as "Malaise Era" cars makes them just as appealing as their earlier counterparts from the '50s and '60s. Not only are they competent transportation (teething issues with first-generation smog equipment having long since been worked out), but they're still affordable, with low buy-ins thanks to the contempt of older collectors and a relatively plentiful parts supply simply because they're yet fairly new. NOS sources still exist in some quantity.

"When I started to gain interest in this era of cars, it was a harsh era to like," Anthony says. "It would be nice to get another generation [of enthusiasts] into them. You have to get people into these cars and give them a drive, the chance to

Thunderbird

That broad expanse of red seems a suitably '70s version of the old "afterburner" taillamp, doesn't it?



That's the thing with the classic car. You can feel that it has a soul when you're driving it.

Three-hour road trips in high summer are no sweat in the air-conditioned confines of a '78 Thunderbird.

feel the difference. There is a satisfaction to keeping [these cars] original. It's harder sometimes, but it feels good to restore a piece and get it back to the way it was."

Technical merits aside, it's the transportation and aesthetic angle that clearly appeals most to Anthony and his equally enthusiastic wife Yeleny.

"She loves the comfort and the ride, and her favorite thing is the flip-up headlamps," Anthony says. So much so, that she turned up a suitable companion for herself—a Fairmont Futura with the same double vinyl top treatment as the Thunderbird.

It was Yeleny who discovered the car at the Carlisle Ford Nationals one year, and her fondness for the Thunderbird spilled over to the more manageably sized Futura. Anthony, a diesel mechanic for the City of New York, had little more issue overhauling the Fairmont than the Thunderbird, as he's become quite intimate with how these older machines work.

"I will research some aspects to get accustomed to the different way of doing things in an older, gas-fueled car, but it's not overly complicated. That's a thing I like about the older cars—they don't have so much complication that takes the fun out of it. And when you're done, there's the satisfaction of taking it out on the road and feeling the difference of something you did versus just computer-based diagnostics."

Out on the road, of course, is where the Thunderbird really excels. Early E- and F-code 'Birds notwithstanding, the purpose of Ford's halo car was always to get from place to place in the most comfort and style possible. While '70s looks may have been very decidedly out for a couple decades, they've gone through several revivals since.

Few today look at Anthony and Yeleny as anything but a couple of hip young folks who have found themselves an extremely cool way to get around; they're seen in the Thunderbird quite a lot. So often, in fact, that Anthony had to double his usual number of oil changes this summer.

Events like the Carlisle Ford Nationals, where we encountered the couple and took these photos, and car shows at Ocean City, Maryland, and Lake George, New York, regularly draw the Thunderbird away from its home in the city. It's not just a show-pony, either, as its style and driving manners prove irresistible enticements to all sorts of touristy excursions.

"We've been to Pennsylvania many times. Done some apple picking on the farm. Sometimes we visit Frenchtown, New Jersey, and visit some of the old towns, just to take a look around."

As designed, the well-maintained Thunderbird eats up the miles and begs for more, with comfortable seating, the original AM/FM/8-track stereo, and the rehabilitated air-conditioning system all conspiring to give a luxurious operating experience like nothing you can buy today. Even if they do bring back such a pillow-soft ride and boudoir-like interior comforts, something will still be lacking, as Anthony puts it:

"That's the thing with the classic car. You can feel that it has a soul when you're driving it."

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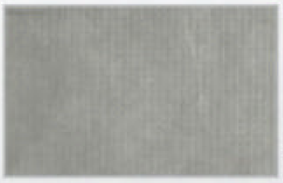

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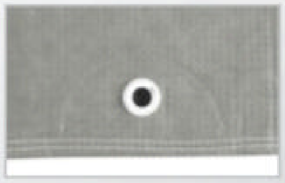

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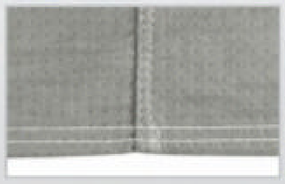

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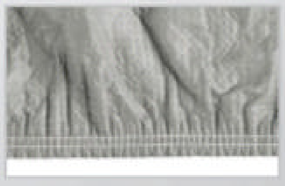

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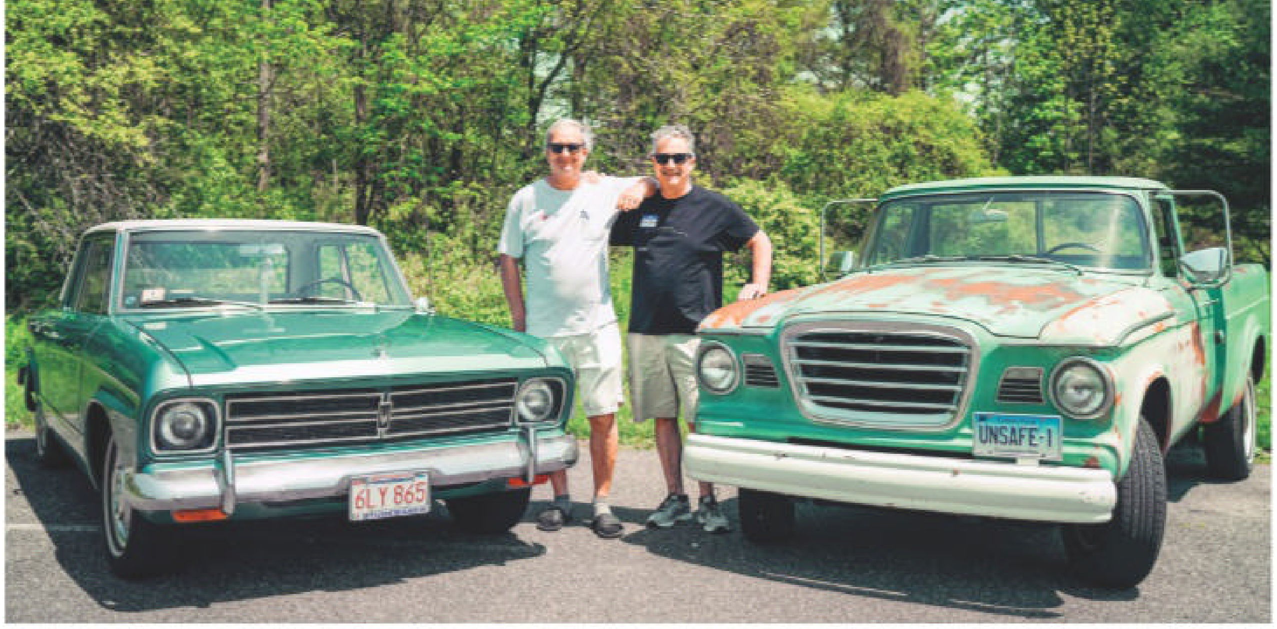
A youthful automotive desire turns into an epic driving journey thanks to this 1966 Studebaker Daytona Sport Sedan

BY MATTHEW LITWIN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW LITWIN AND DAVID CONWILL

Remember family vacation road trips? Exciting as the tourist destinations looked on paper, getting there was a different story. It could have been many hours, or days, away, at a time when built-in vehicle entertainment systems were as futuristic as the Jetsons' gravity-defying bubbletop "cars." Playing full-size board games like Monopoly in a moving car wasn't exactly a practical prospect. Travel games were few, meaning creativity was a necessity. Just ask Newton, Massachusetts, resident Paul Dutton.

"It started when I was a kid in the late Sixties. Growing up in Boston—about five miles from Fenway Park—I became aware of the different cars around me. One neighbor had a beautiful Edsel station wagon. Down the road was a Packard. But what stood out in my mind were the



Paul's affection for the Studebaker brand has been contagious. His brother, Steve (right) recently purchased this Champ half-ton pickup; the two have attended meets together since.

few Studebaker taxis driving around. I've always liked the underdog, and even then, I knew there were not that many Studebakers around," Paul says.

As he was drawn to a brand that had ceased production in the States during 1964, Paul's early love for Studebakers kept him vigilant during family vacations. According to him, "For years, we'd leave the city and head to the Adirondack Mountains and, faced with a five- or six-hour ride, my brother and I created a chart we used to tally the number of various makes we saw along the way. Chevy always won, and Ford was always second. Low on the list was Studebaker. I loved seeing them; that anticipation and the chart made the miles slip by."

Not satisfied with merely spotting Studebakers, Paul took the initiative to devise a plan to get a ride in one, courtesy of his many trips to see the Boston Red Sox play.

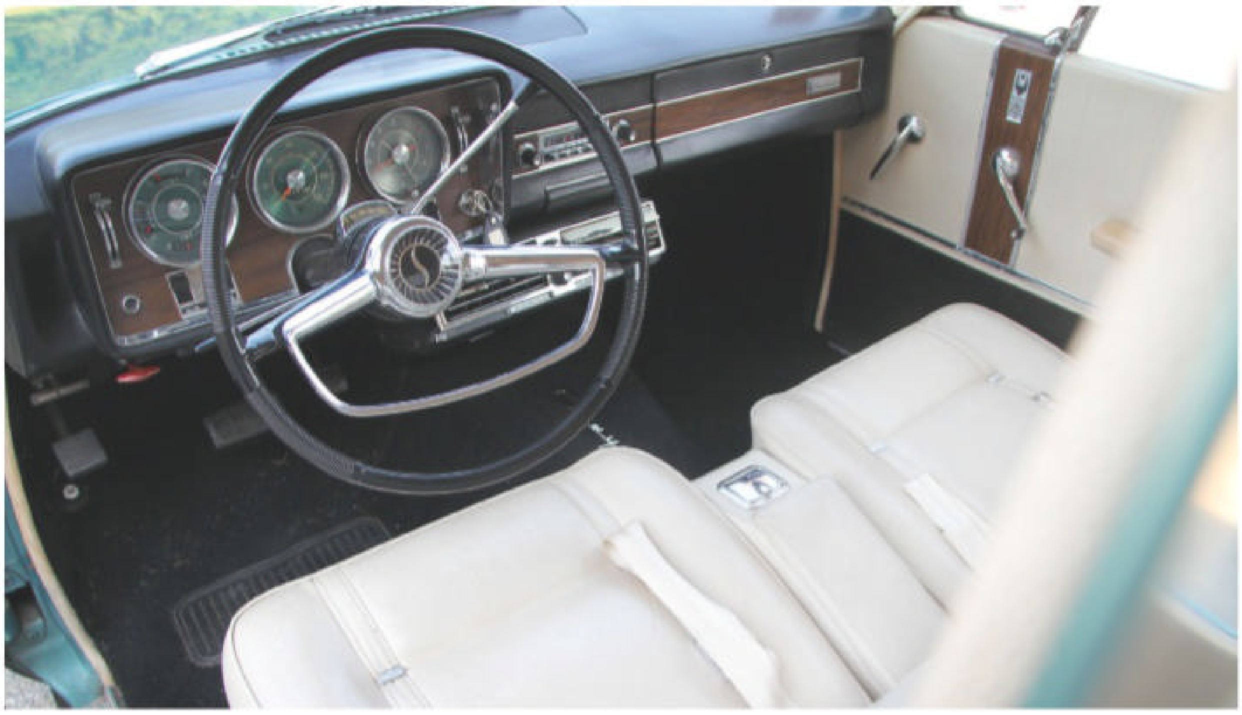
"At the time, the taxi lot was right next to Fenway, so I asked my dad if we could stop and see if we could get a ride in one of the Studebakers still in the fleet. He agreed and drove my brother and I over to the lot. There were tons of Checkers, but we finally found a Studebaker; it was painted in a gorgeous two-tone Sea Green and Dark Green combination. The problem was finding an employee—the place seemed empty—but we eventually did, and my dad explained the situation. The guy paused, grabbed the keys, and said, 'Come on.' By now, I knew production had continued in Canada, and I knew the car was one of the last-year models, but at that time I wasn't sure if it was a '64, '65 or '66. It didn't matter to me—it was cool. He gave us a 10- or 15-minute ride around Boston and he didn't even charge my dad, but I'm sure he got a tip. That ride sealed it for me. I wanted a Studebaker."

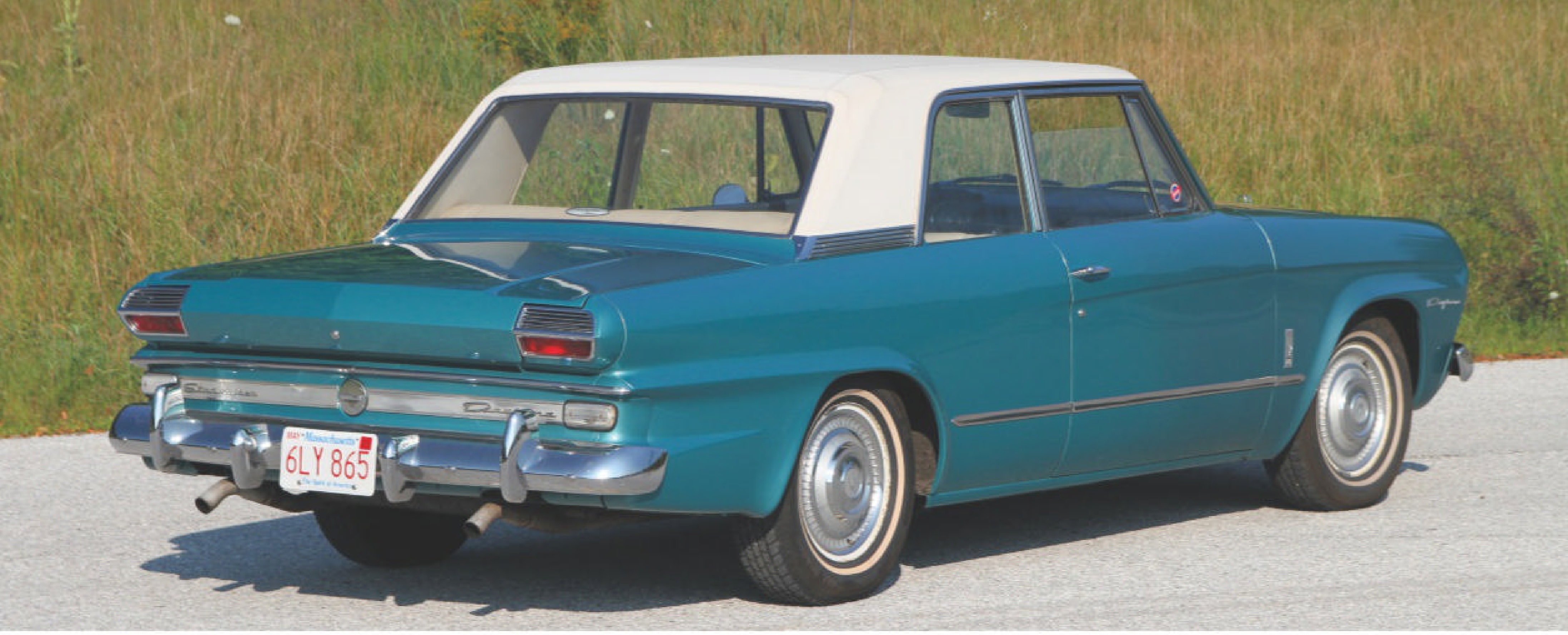
And this is where Paul kicks himself. Cars came and went in his life, including a 1967 Mercury Cougar XR-7 that very well could have tipped the scale in terms of his preferences. The Cougar was his first car, and in time, a second Cougar followed that was eventually sold to a close friend, under the condition that Paul was offered first refusal. Yet, Studebakers clung close to his heart, and in 2017 Paul was finally determined to obtain one—the same year he sold his "big cat."

The remarkable condition of the original interior was clearly the result of care by the Daytona's previous owners. A neat find was the portable Studebaker radio.

OFF
ON
TEMP
GAS
OIL
AMP

Studebaker





"I flew out to the Studebaker International Meet in South Bend—the big gathering that happens every five years—expressly to look for a car. I said, 'I'm not coming back without one.' Well, word travels in the Studebaker community and it didn't take long for me to be pointed to a 1966 Daytona Sport Sedan at a nearby facility. I met the seller and expressed my interest, only to be told that someone had already made an offer. But then he said the prospective buyer hadn't returned yet, so I asked if I could at least take it for a test drive. I didn't know him at all, but he just gave me the keys," he relays.

According to Paul, a third person seemed to have taken a keen interest in the Daytona as well. It was this individual who, conveniently, had been examining the chassis, casually stating that its condition was impressive despite the Studebaker being in original, unrestored condition. Again, opportunity knocked, and Paul took advantage.

"It was clear to me this third person had more mechanical experience than me, so I asked if he cared to join me on the test drive so that I could base my decision on both my impressions of the condition and his. I drove the two of us on a variety of nearby roads and after a few miles it was obvious to us the Daytona was solid; it seemed like it didn't need

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Even though the 283-cu.in. V-8 within the Daytona was called the Studebaker Thunderbolt, it was a McKinnon-produced version of the Chevy 283.

anything. So, when we returned to the seller's shop, I was ready to make an offer. Fortunately, the first offer never materialized, and I was able to purchase it for $6,500. I wrote a check on the spot. The only problem I then faced was getting the car to Massachusetts, but that was solved when the seller directed me to a guy he knew who could help with transport. I had it in my driveway a couple weeks later.

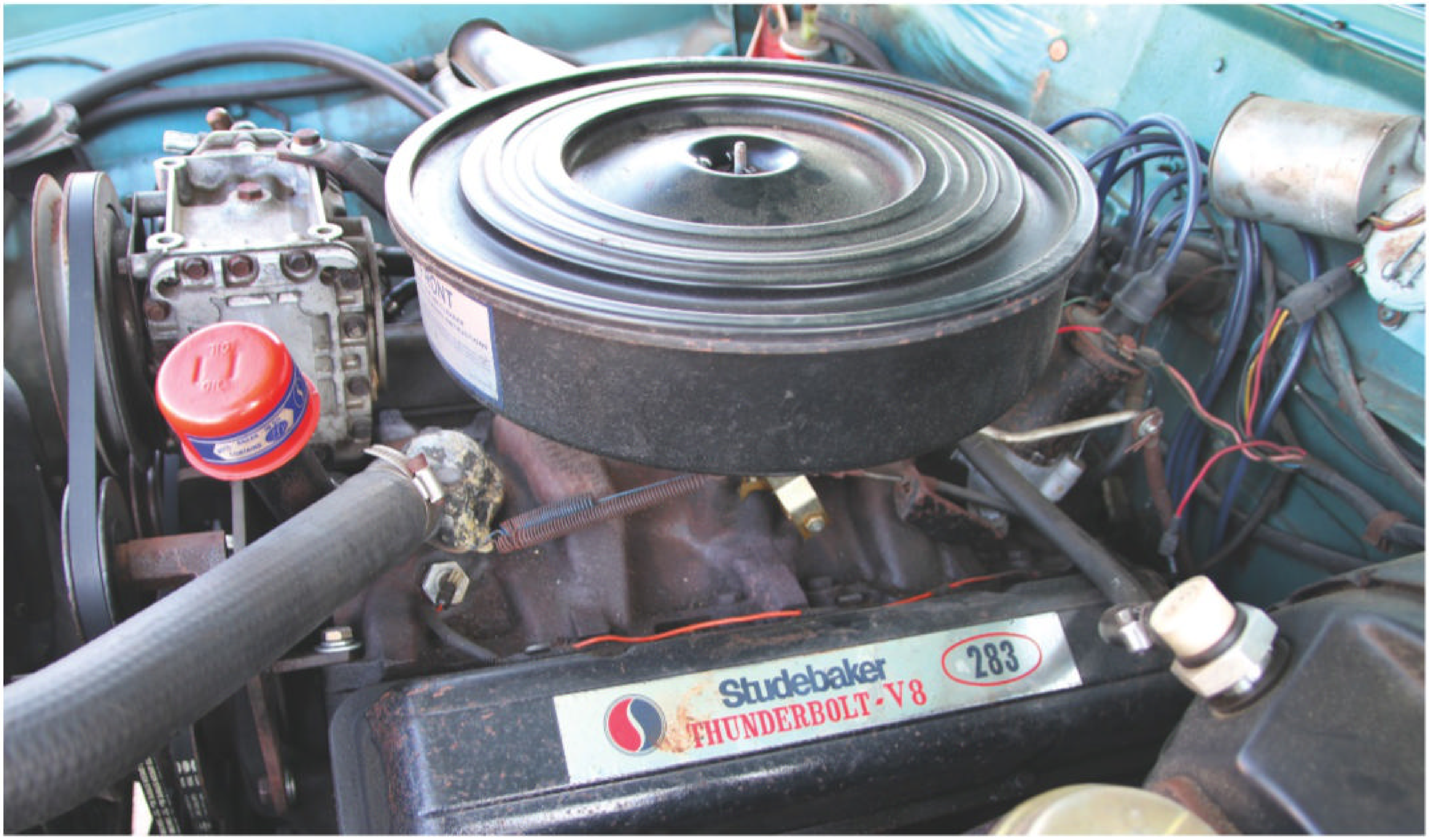
"I knew I wanted that car the moment I saw it, because I love the 1964-'66 Daytonas and their siblings, the Cruiser, the Commander, and the Challenger, which were the lower-level models. Funny to me is that I went to the Studebaker meet and I didn't buy the car at the meet; I bought it off-site," Paul laughs. "I waited until I was 60 to buy one and I've loved them since I was 9 or 10. I'm making up for it now."

By "making up for it," Paul means regularly driving the rare Studebaker. The 1966 model year would prove to be the last for the storied automaker, a year in which just 8,935 cars were built. Of that number, 1,811 Daytona-trimmed models were assembled. That figure included 938 Daytona Wagonaires and 253 six-cylinder equipped Daytonas. The remaining 620 were V-8 powered Sport Sedans.

That engine, incidentally, wasn't Studebaker's venerable V-8, but rather a McKinnon 283-cu.in. V-8 that boasted 195 hp and 285 lb-ft of torque. The name comes from McKinnon Industries Division of General Motors of Canada, which was producing the Chevrolet-designed 283 for various Canadian market models and for Studebaker. According to published accounts, those destined for the automaker were stamped "Studebaker Only." No matter the origin, though, the 283 had its own workhorse reputation.

"It's a great engine," Paul reports. He adds, "I just returned from a weekend driving tour all over Maine with nearly a dozen other Studebaker owners. To get to the starting point, I had to drive 150 miles. We did a lot of sightseeing and stopped at the Stanley Steemer Museum; altogether, I think I drove 500 or 550 miles in the Daytona during this weekend alone. The tour ended just in time for me to drive straight back to work in Boston. At this moment, it's parked in a safe, secure garage.

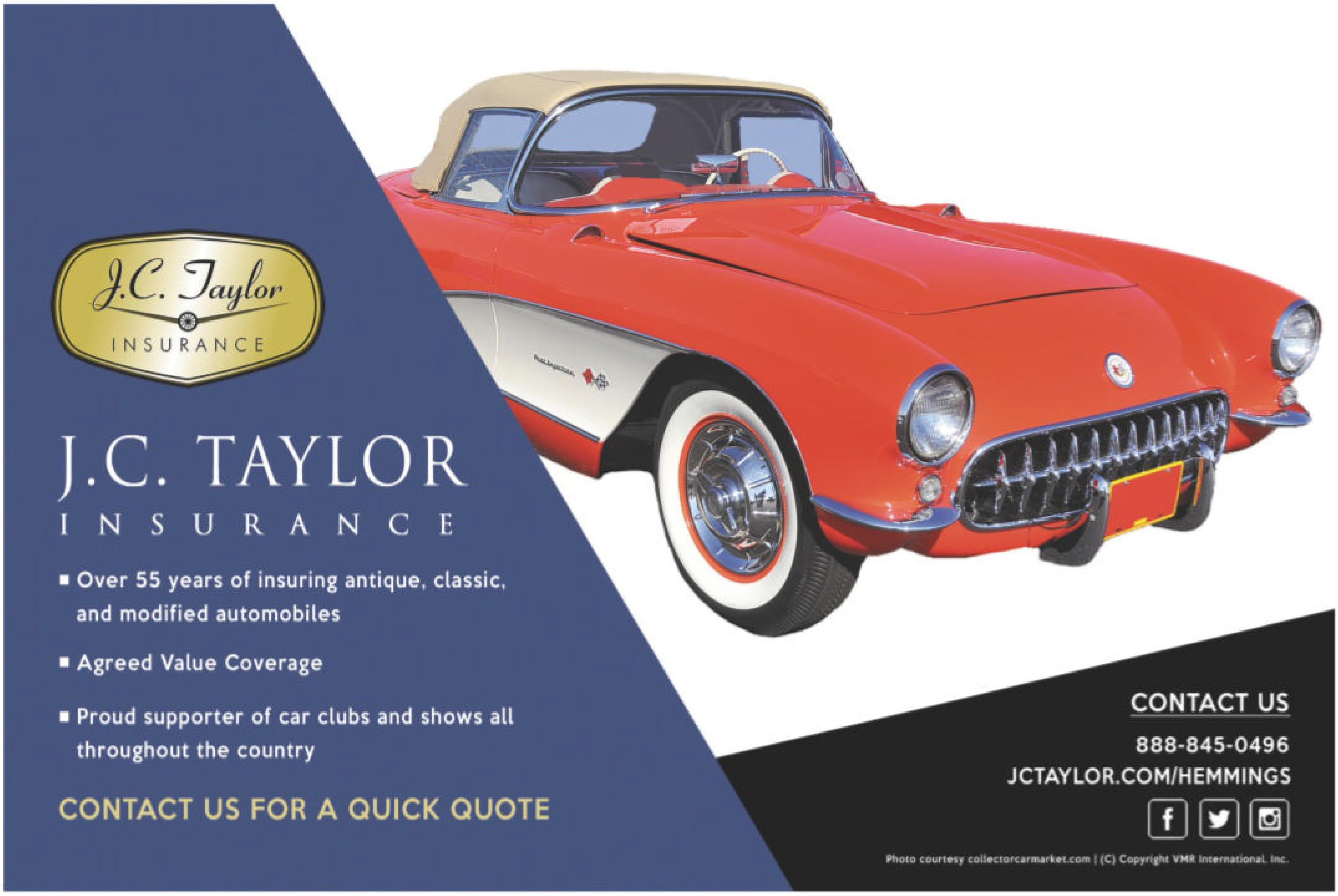
But that excursion was more the norm than the exception for Paul—road tripping in the Studebaker is a primary source of his enjoyment of the car. "Last year, not only did I drive it to the Studebaker regional meet in Rutland, Vermont, I drove it to Indianapolis for the Studebaker International meet in September. And this past May, I went to the International Meet in South Bend," he details, explaining that, "For me, the thrill was going to the International Meet with my Studebaker instead of going without one, like I did the first time."



Along with fellow members of the Studebaker Driver's Club, Paul recently completed a 500-plus-mile tour of Maine, stopped here overlooking Rangeley Lake.

Paul's affection for Studebakers was nurtured during long-distance drives with friends and family, so it probably makes sense that he's enjoying the car he longed for in a similar fashion. "In the last five and a half years, I've driven my Daytona 23,000 miles. The best part of anything I do with the car is when I go on cruises with my friends in the Studebaker Driver's Club. We stop at diners, antique shops, museums, overlooks…you name it. It's really the most fun we have, whether it's 150 miles or 350."

The future would seem to hold more of the same for Paul and the Studebaker, no matter where the road leads. "I'm driving the Daytona on streets most people wouldn't take an antique car on. So far, it's been a good experience. That's what they were built for anyway—driving."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Desert Rose

It took a variety of tools and an engineer's experience to complete this ground-up restoration of a 1951 MG TD

BY MARK J. McCOURT • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH
RESTORATION IMAGES COURTESY OF KEN BLAISDELL

Many people suddenly and unexpectedly found themselves with a good amount of free time on their hands in the spring of 2020. Some channeled their energy into watching movies on the couch; other, more goal-oriented shut-ins tackled creative projects. The fully renovated, near-daily-driven MG on these pages benefitted immeasurably from the concentrated attention its handy owner paid it in those extraordinary days, and we readers and fellow road-users get to enjoy the result.

Two-seat sports cars from Abingdon, England, have been a part of Ken Blaisdell's life from the time he was a teenager in the late 1960s. "When I graduated high school, my dad bought me a 1960 MGA," the Gilbert, Arizona, resident tells us. "It needed a clutch, so the first thing I had to do was pull the engine and install one; that started my career of working on MGs. I had another MGA and an MGB in the 1970s, and I loved their sports car feel even though most of my friends were into muscle cars. I always liked the classic lines of the TD, but never came across one I could afford on a high school kid's budget."

It wasn't until the autumn of 2019 that Ken found his long-sought TD; it was local and partially disassembled, being a stalled restoration project. As he recalls, this car had similarly been a high school graduation gift to the father of the man from whom he purchased the car; it had come from Washington State and had been "used up" before it was given to the son, who began working on it before adult responsibilities got in the way and it was set aside. The MG was almost complete but in pieces; the body had been repainted a light metallic green and the engine was said to be in operable condition, although it hadn't run in years.

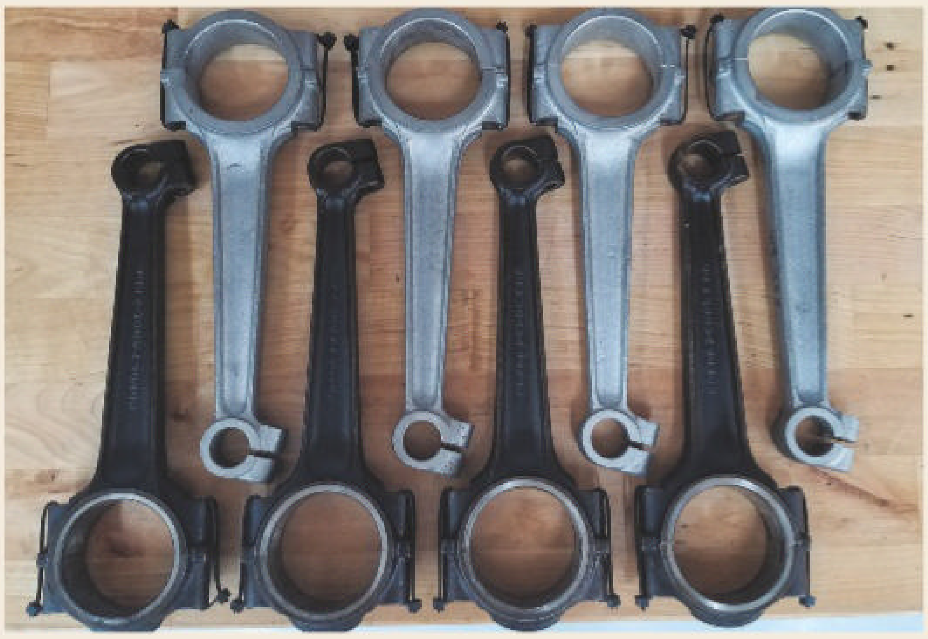
"I was told everything worked—the seller said I should be able to start it after adding gas and coolant," Ken remembers. "My hope was that I'd be able to do a few things, put a couple pieces back together—I could start it up and maybe drive it around the block while I was working on it. Over time, I would get it painted, fix the interior, etc. But before I got it running, I wanted to check a few things."

A key pre-purchase inspection proved the 1,299-cc OHV four-cylinder would manually turn over. Once it was in his shop at home, the retired mechanical engineer removed the upper radiator hose to check the condition of the water inlet; he was shocked to find it was filled with collected material he likened to oatmeal. "Each time I did something, I found something behind it that needed to be fixed," Ken says with a shrug. "I thought, 'Okay, this whole thing needs to be taken apart.'

"I pulled the head off, and it didn't look bad. I would have hardened valve seats installed. I rolled the crank to move the pistons so I could look at the cylinder bores; they weren't scratched up," he continues. "I used snap gauges to check the bore diameter at the top, middle, and the bottom. They were barrel-shaped to about .030-inch in the middle! I could tell the engine had been apart before because it was put back together wrong. It had never been honed or re-bored, and the slack timing chain hadn't been replaced; everything just continued to wear. I had no option but to tear it down and send the block to AMF Machining in Phoenix to be bored .060-inch oversize; at the same time, they re-ground the crank."

As he worked his way deeper into the TD, Ken kept noticing different ways in which the British car's components were, to borrow a term, "bodged." He began posting regular project updates

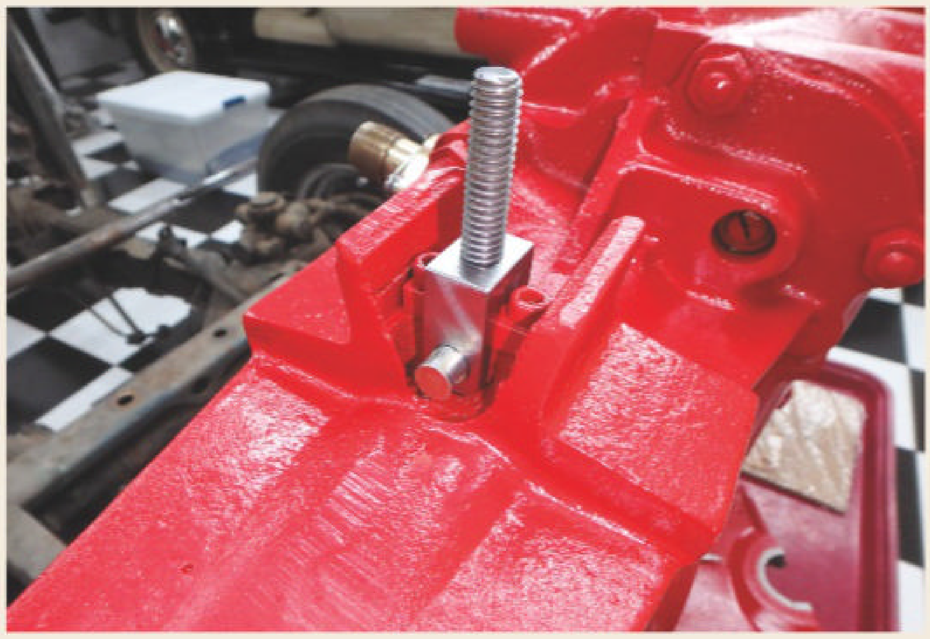
A partially completed project car purchased through a Craigslist ad, the TD had sat dormant more than a decade. Ken hoped to make it drivable and work on its various systems one at a time, but he discovered unforeseen issues that prompted a full restoration.



When Ken reassembled the engine, he found the fourth piston's wrist pin didn't align with the crankshaft; the connecting rod was damaged in a previous rebuild. He straightened it but opted to buy a set of professionally balanced and Magnaflux-tested rods instead.

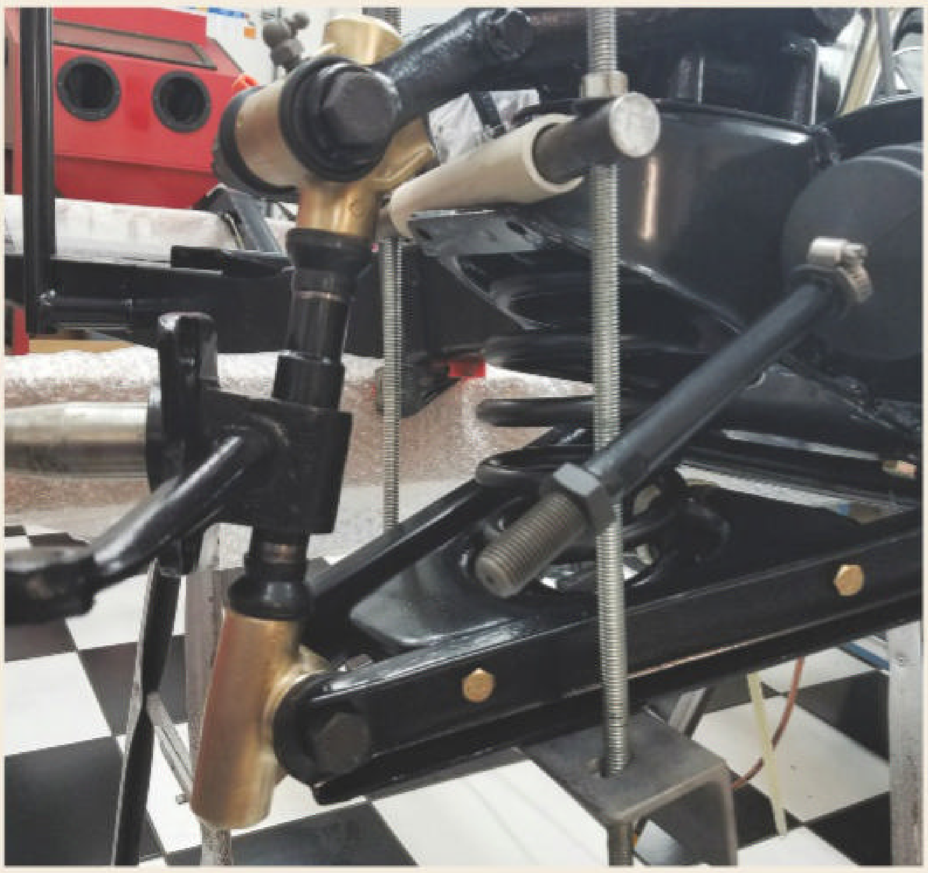
Because sandblasting a grease-covered metal surface is ineffectual, Ken's wife Diane pitched in, and the couple spent a day manually scraping the TD's frame clean of grime. He would fabricate and weld on a new running board bracket to replace a broken original.

This car left the factory red but was painted blue and light green before its current caretaker chose to have it refinished in a 1960s Jaguar British Racing Green. In three weeks' time, Maaco gave the body tub and panels three sanded coats of primer, base, and clear.

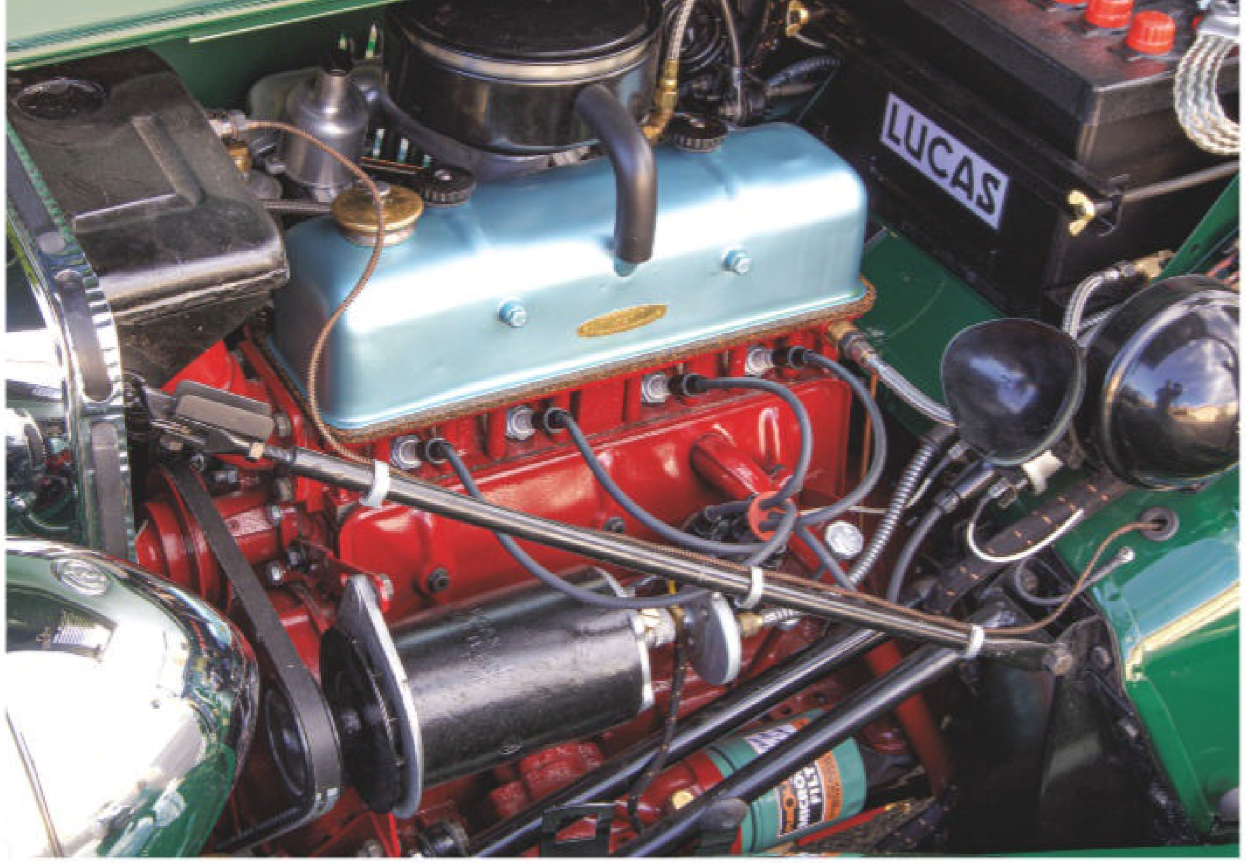


A flange at the end of the transmission was broken off, leaving jagged sections of cast iron on either side of the bolt hole; Ken machined the damaged metal flat, squaring off the hole so he could drill and tap new holes used to hold a replacement steel boss.

While the TD's steel bodywork was in good shape, media blasting exposed some fender rust perforations and a previously Bondo-filled antenna hole. Ken welded a patch to replace the missing metal, and used lead, skimmed with plastic filler, to fill the rust holes.



One sagging front coil spring necessitated replacing both with new, but Ken couldn't locate a spring compressor that fit the MG's small front suspension components. He very carefully engineered his own, homemade compressor by utilizing items he had in his workshop.



on social media in which he referred to a character he dubbed "Brutus the Mechanic," who was responsible for the oafish workmanship he kept discovering: "Apparently, when Brutus got done rebuilding the engine, it still had low oil pressure. That would not be surprising as there was .003- to .004-inch too much clearance between the connecting rod and main bearings and their respective journals on the crankshaft. So, he bought and installed a new oil pump. Unfortunately, that would not have solved the problem."

He continued; "To get still more oil pressure, Brutus stretched the spring in the pressure relief valve. Second, he plugged the hollow bolt that passes the oil from the engine block (where the pump is) to the cylinder head, using a slug of brass with a smaller hole. The oil pressure gauge on the dashboard is connected to one end of this bolt, so the restriction would have increased backpressure, and shown up as higher pressure on the gauge. Brilliant! Except that it also restricted the oil flow by 80-percent to the whole top half of the engine!"

Ken had also found the transmission housing had been damaged in an earlier attempt to remove the driveline. "The last mechanic didn't know there was a bolt under the tail end of the gearbox, apparently used a crowbar to 'free it up,' and broke off half of the boss from the casting," he wrote. "Luckily, I was able to machine away the rest of the boss and make a custom-fit steel part to replace it. He also left out a bearing guard inside the gearbox when he reassembled it and lost the inspection cover plate on the bell-housing. I was able to buy the former and make the latter."

In addition to the engine, every component under the bonnet was rebuilt. The generator cooling fan was missing—"I'm guessing that Brutus stuck a big screwdriver through the fan fins to hold the shaft while breaking the pulley nut free, bending the heck out of them in the process," he posted—and the distributor had been likewise damaged and poorly repaired. He would purchase replacement bits for these and other assemblies through vendors like Moss

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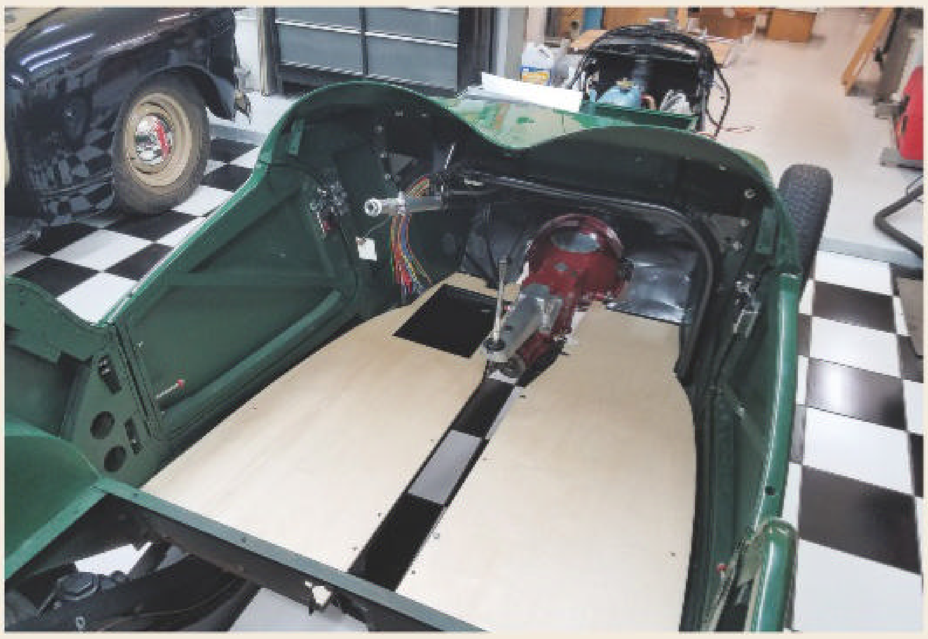
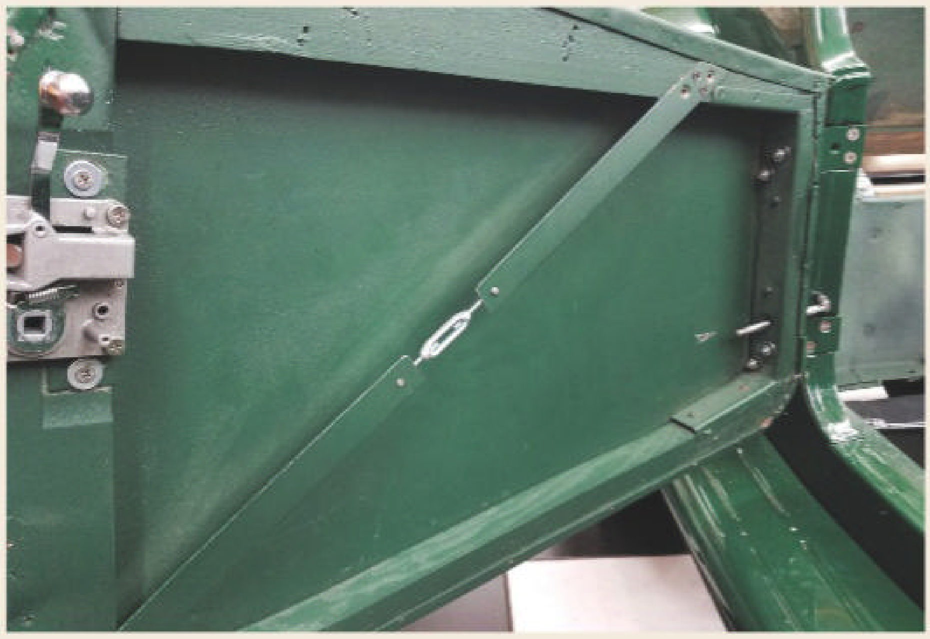
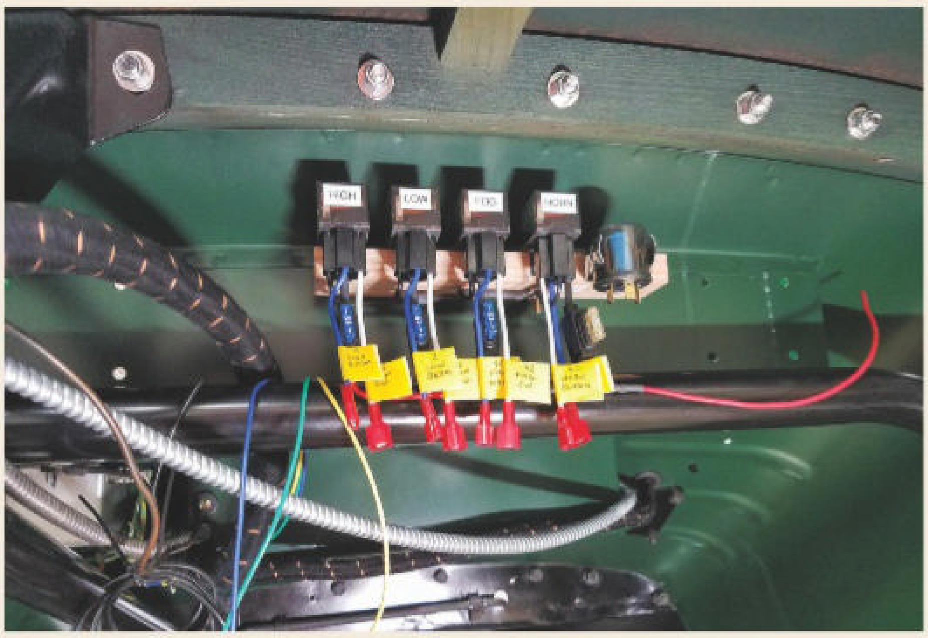


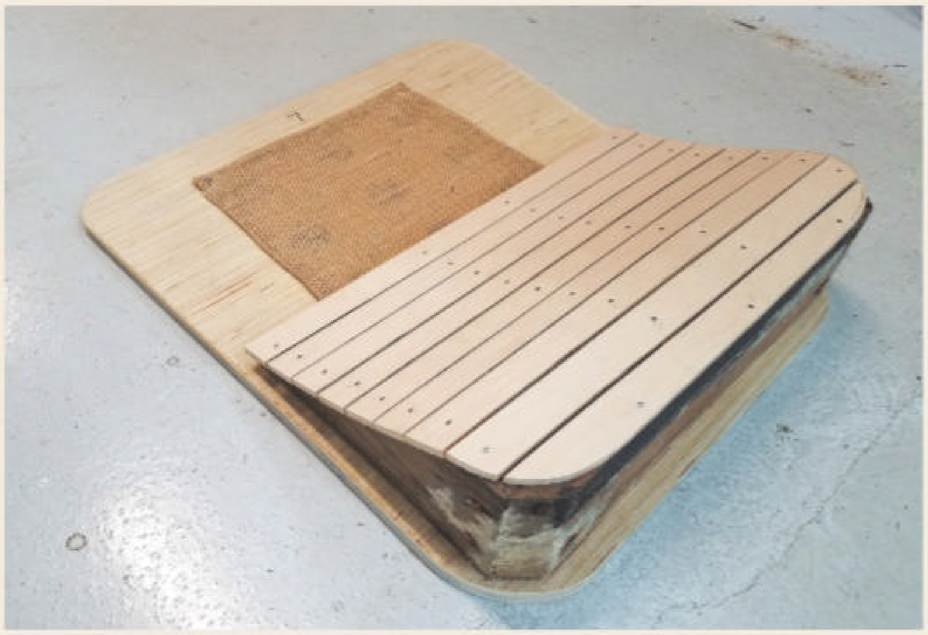
Ken made precise templates of the original wood floorboards in cardboard, transferring them onto plywood that he cut to exactly replicate the factory pieces. He restored the adjustability feature of the steering column that was damaged prior to his ownership.



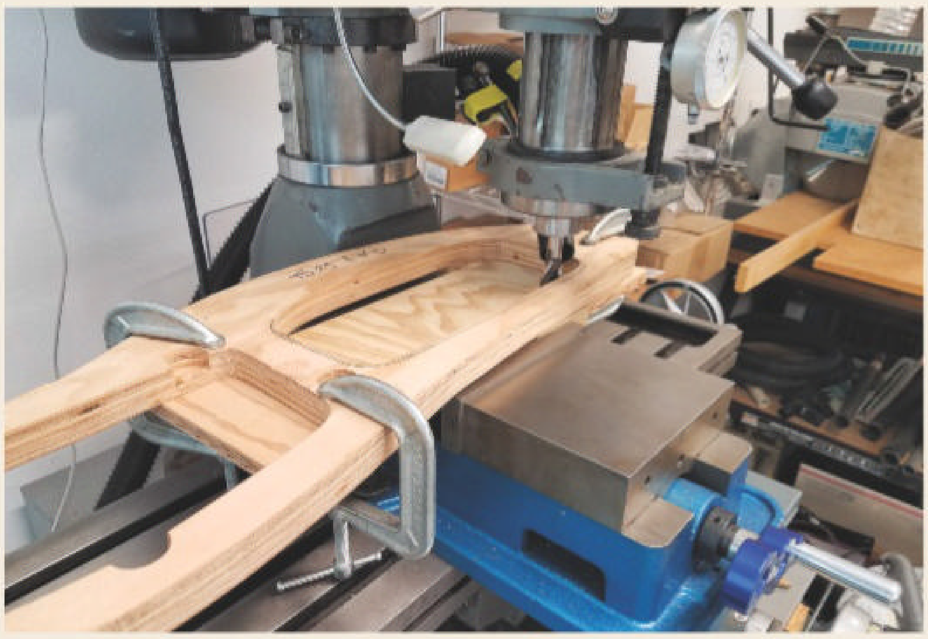
Door fit was something Ken regretted not finalizing before the MG was painted because it proved very difficult to tweak them to close properly without damaging the finish. He cut the angled braces in each door and welded in turnbuckles to make finite adjustments.



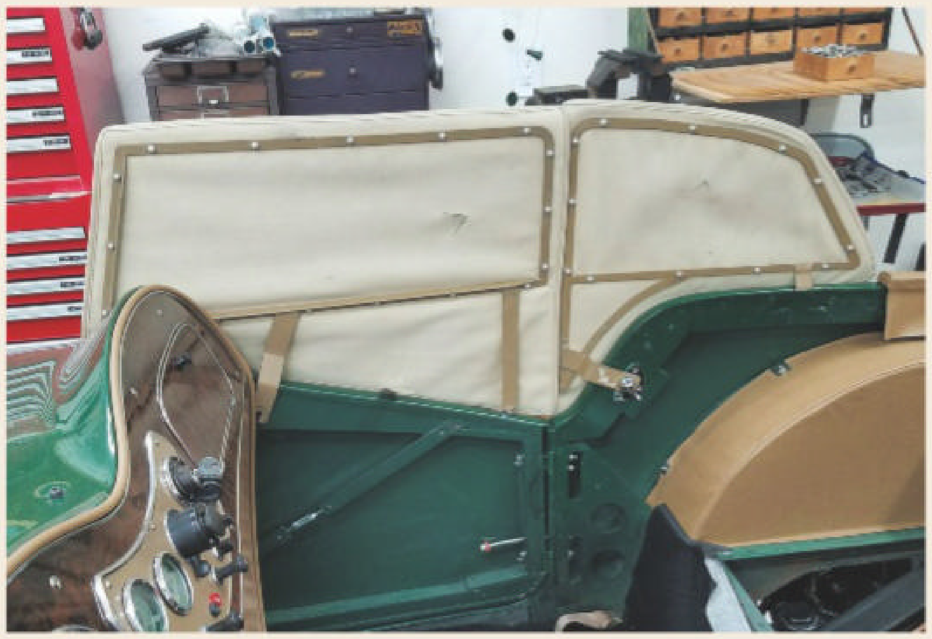
The wiring harness from Moss Motors proved challenging to route, and Ken tinned all the ends for durability. The TD was originally built with just two fuses (one for the horn, one for all else!) so he added a block of fuse holders with relays under the dash for protection.



The MG had separate seat bottoms and a common seat back. The 1951 wood and padding materials had degraded, so they had to be remade using the originals as patterns. Ken was unsuccessful in steaming plywood for the curved seat-base tops, so he used lathe instead.



TDs left Abingdon with a Rexine vinyl-covered dash fascia, but aftermarket wood-veneer fascias are a popular upgrade; this one, still in its unopened box, came with the car. Pockets had to be milled in the plywood backing so the instruments would fit properly.

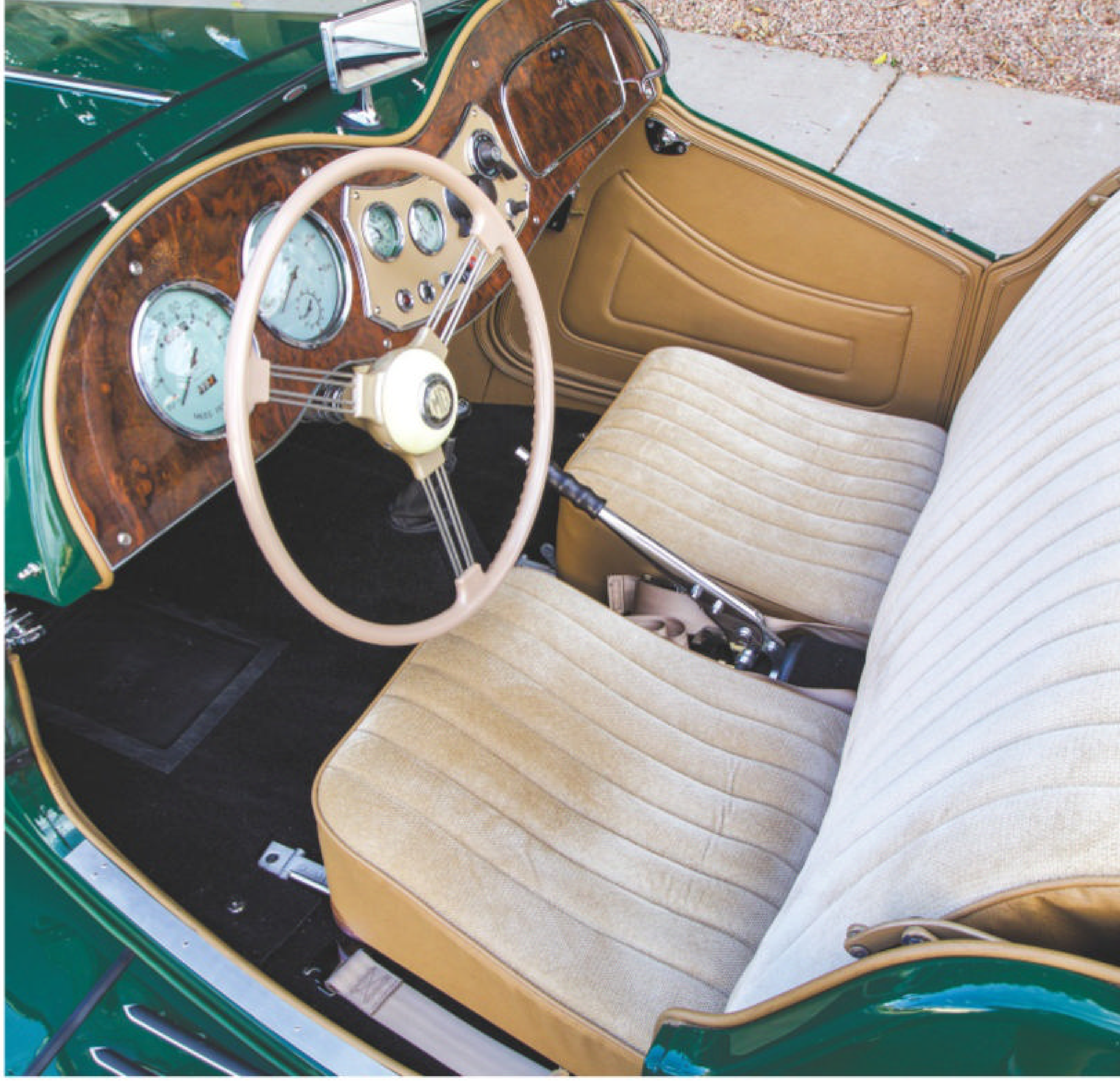


The roof's frame had been assembled wrong, so Ken had to fix that along with replacing rusty, staining steel upholstery tacks. A new fabric top and side curtains came with the car, and he would cut the excess canvas off the curtains, exposing clear vinyl below.

Motors, Abingdon Spares, and the local MG T-series specialist, Mesa, Arizona's, From The Frame Up.

Although our feature car had spent years in Arizona, the body tub evidenced its decades in the Pacific Northwest through seized firewall bolts and patches of rust in the bases of both front fenders. Media blasting to remove the marginal repaint also exposed a ¾-inch rectangular hole in the passenger fender that had been made to house a radio antenna and was filled with Bondo. Ken says, "To fill the hole correctly, I first made it round using a hole knockout, then cut the same size slug from 22-gauge steel and TIG welded it in place." Thankfully, the body tub's hardwood framing was intact, if weathered; the only area needing replacement wood was the top rear edge of the tub, a section that had been covered in vinyl.

His goal was to minimize the amount of plastic filler the bodywork would require, so he taught himself how to work with lead, as was the technique when the MG was new. Among various suddenly useful old tools Ken had picked up at yard sales through the years was a 3/16-inch roll of lead solder; he used this to repair small dents and perforations in the fenders where the sheetmetal was too thin to



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weld without burning. "Using a propane torch on the underside, I melted the lead on the surface and filled the holes. I wore a breathing mask as I filed and sanded the area, then primed it. Like the other fix, a coat of spot putty smoothed out the surface, ready for paint."

The TD's rolling chassis was generally in good shape, although the front coil springs needed replacement and the rear leaf springs, rebuilding. Ken had to engineer a coil-spring compressor to replace those springs because he couldn't find one that would accommodate the roadster's small coils. The frame itself was in good shape under 69 years of caked-on grease, oil, and dirt; working together, Ken and his wife Diane scraped and de-greased the frame to ready it for media blasting and powder coating by Pro-Strip in Mesa.

While he finished the chassis compo-

> *I always liked the classic lines of the TD, but never came across one I could afford on a high school kid's budget.*

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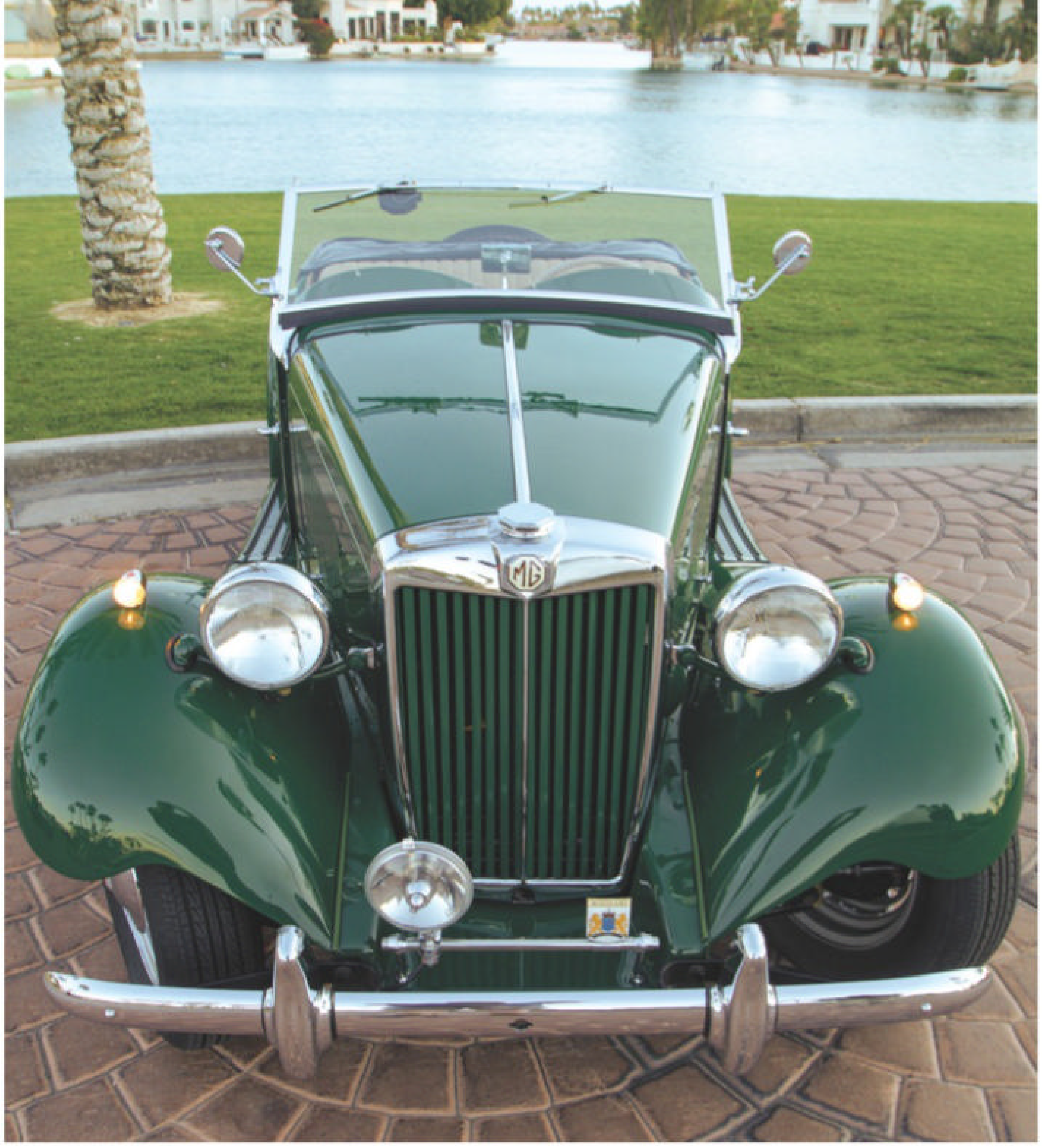
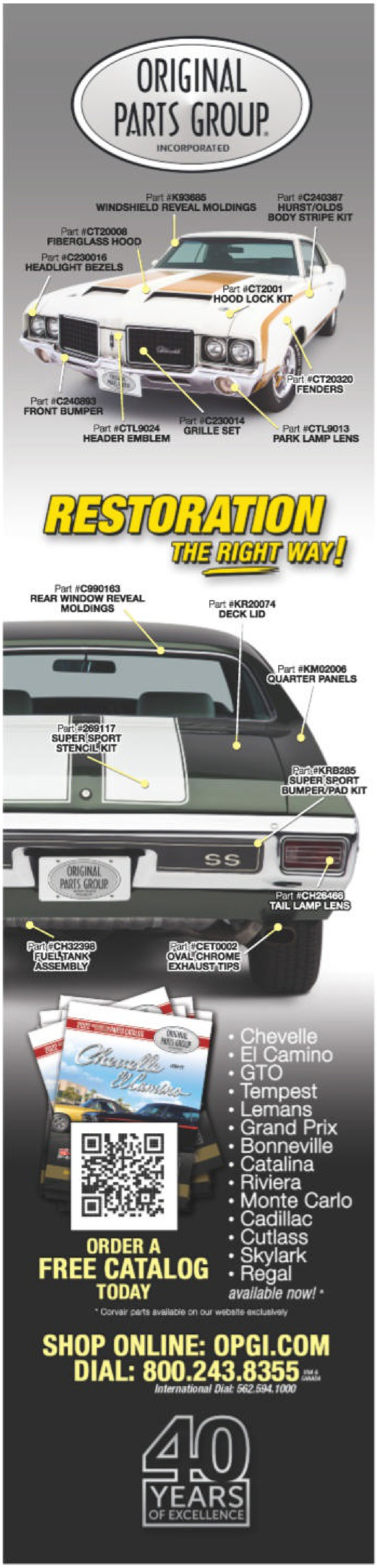
HISTORIC VEHICLE
72RG
GRAND CANYON STATE



nents, the body was painted by the local Maaco shop. Ken always fancied British Racing Green, and the hue he chose was a 1964 Jaguar color. Three coats of Nason epoxy primer were topped with three of Nason Axalta body color, followed by another three coats of clear that were sanded with 1500-, 2000-, and 3000-grit paper. "Because I had all the body panels and the tub removed from the frame and wanted them painted that way while I was working on the chassis, few shops were interested in taking on the job," he tells us. "Brandon Baker at the Maaco in Mesa was happy to work around my odd request, gave me a quote of three weeks, and a price quote much more in line with a 'driver' than museum quality. He sent me photos and updates during the process, and delivered a gorgeous job in three weeks and one day that I am proud to take to any car show. And when the painting was done, my wife suggested storing all the parts in the living room until I had the chassis ready to accept them," he says with a smile. "Bless her heart!"

The interior afforded another opportunity for Ken to make this MG his own. In consideration of his desert climate, he chose fabric instead of factory leather to upholster the seats. "If I wanted to show this at Pebble Beach, I'd do it differently, but I drive the car almost every day, so I put comfort first. The wooden seat bases were pretty well rotten, and originally used plywood steam-molded to form a contour. I couldn't make that work, so I recreated the contour in lathe," he recalls. The interior panels and black carpeting were kits from Moss Motors, while Sonny's Upholstery in Tempe tackled the seats. The aftermarket burl wood dash fascia came with the car; Ken had to mill sections from the back so the gauges would properly fit.

There was a bit of trepidation when he went to start the TD for the first time, but there was no hesitation on the part of the 60-hp engine to fire: "It started so fast, it startled me," Ken says with a smile, adding he had to do relatively little adjusting to the rebuilt SU carburetors, a credit to using the factory shop manual. "As frustrating as it was at times, there were things I learned, and I enjoyed the process. I obviously had nothing else to do because of COVID, but it was testing my skills, some of which I learned a very long time ago and hadn't used since. I got to use a lot of tools that had been sitting in my toolbox for years, along with ones I'd picked up at yard sales on the off chance I'd need them someday," he muses. "There is not a single nut or bolt on the car I did not turn, and that's a point of pride." ♾



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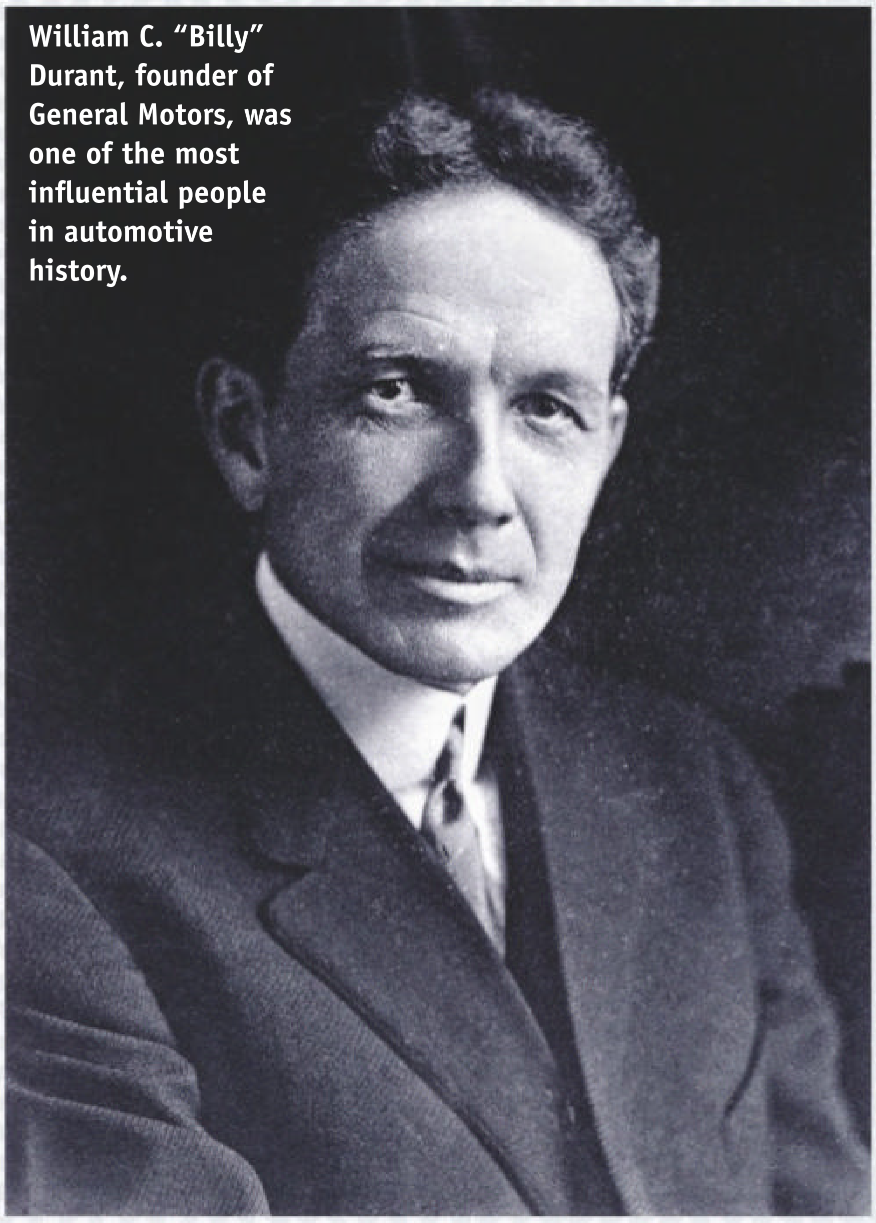
Star Quality

After being ousted from GM, Billy Durant aimed for the skies

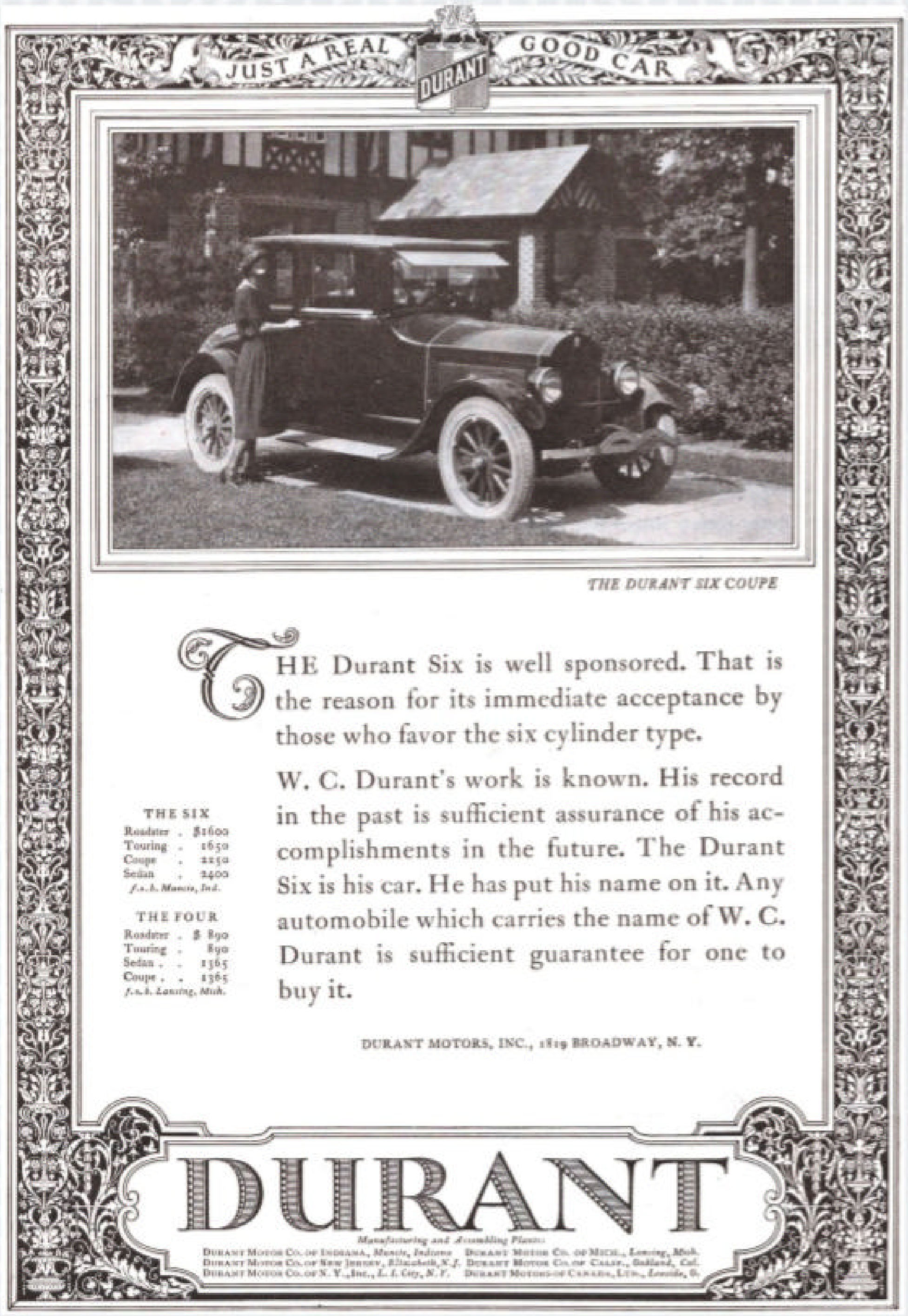
BY PATRICK FOSTER

ART COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION



William C. "Billy" Durant, founder of General Motors, was one of the most influential people in automotive history.

This 1923 advertisement carries the banner "Just a Real Good Car." By this point Durant offered models spanning in price from $890 to $2,400.



JUST A REAL GOOD CAR

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W. C. Durant's work is known. His record in the past is sufficient assurance of his accomplishments in the future. The Durant Six is his car. He has put his name on it. Any automobile which carries the name of W. C. Durant is sufficient guarantee for one to buy it.

THE SIX

Roadster	$1600
Touring	1650
Coupe	2250
Sedan	2400

f.o.b. Muncie, Ind.

THE FOUR

Roadster	$ 890
Touring	890
Sedan	1365
Coupe	1365

f.o.b. Lansing, Mich.

DURANT MOTORS, INC., 1819 BROADWAY, N. Y.

DURANT

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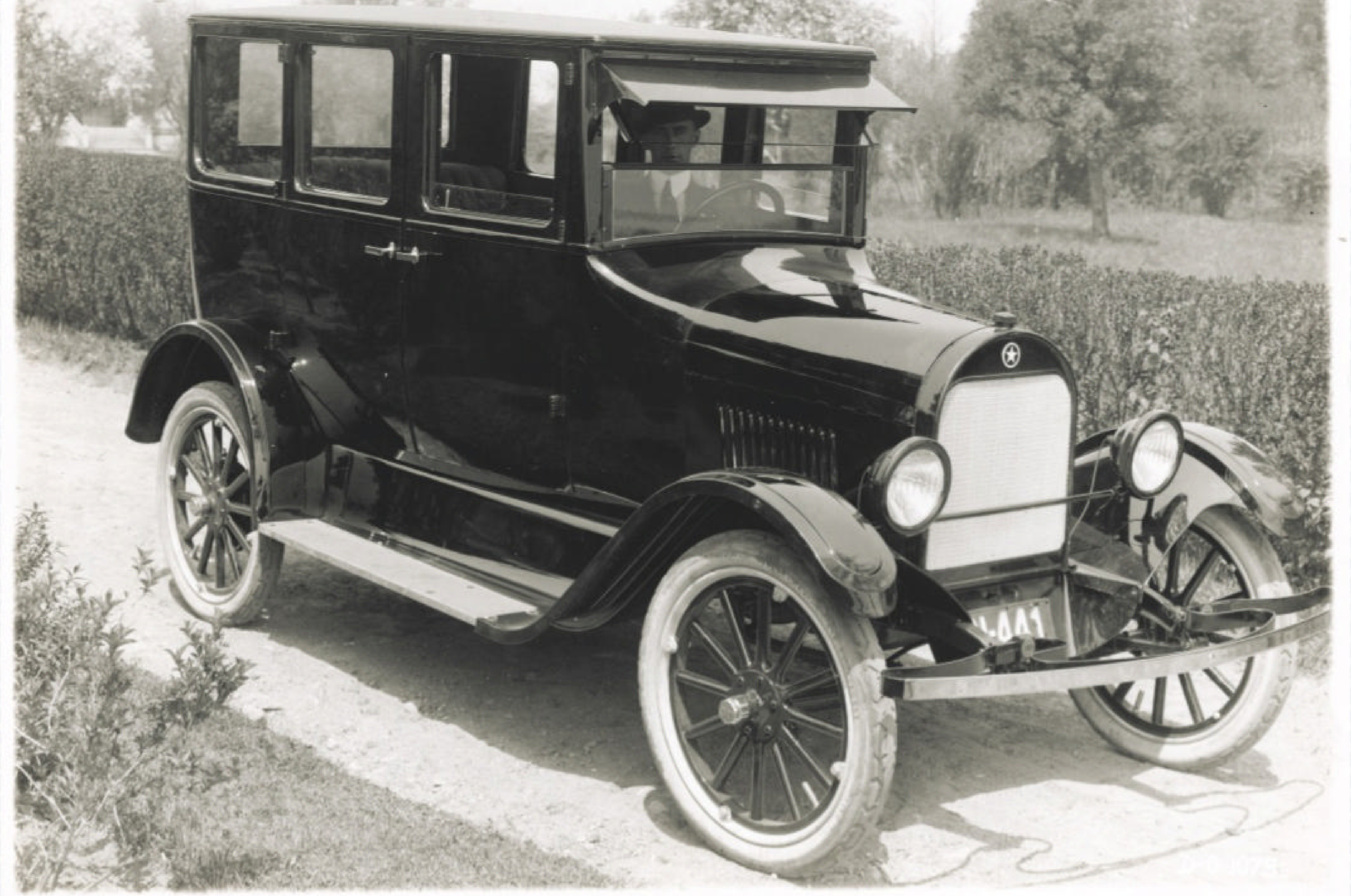
Durant Motor Co. of New Jersey, *Elizabeth, N. J.*
Durant Motor Co. of N. Y., Inc., *L. I. City, N. Y.*
Durant Motor Co. of Mich., *Lansing, Mich.*
Durant Motor Co. of Calif., *Oakland, Cal.*
Durant Motors of Canada, Ltd., *Leaside, O.*

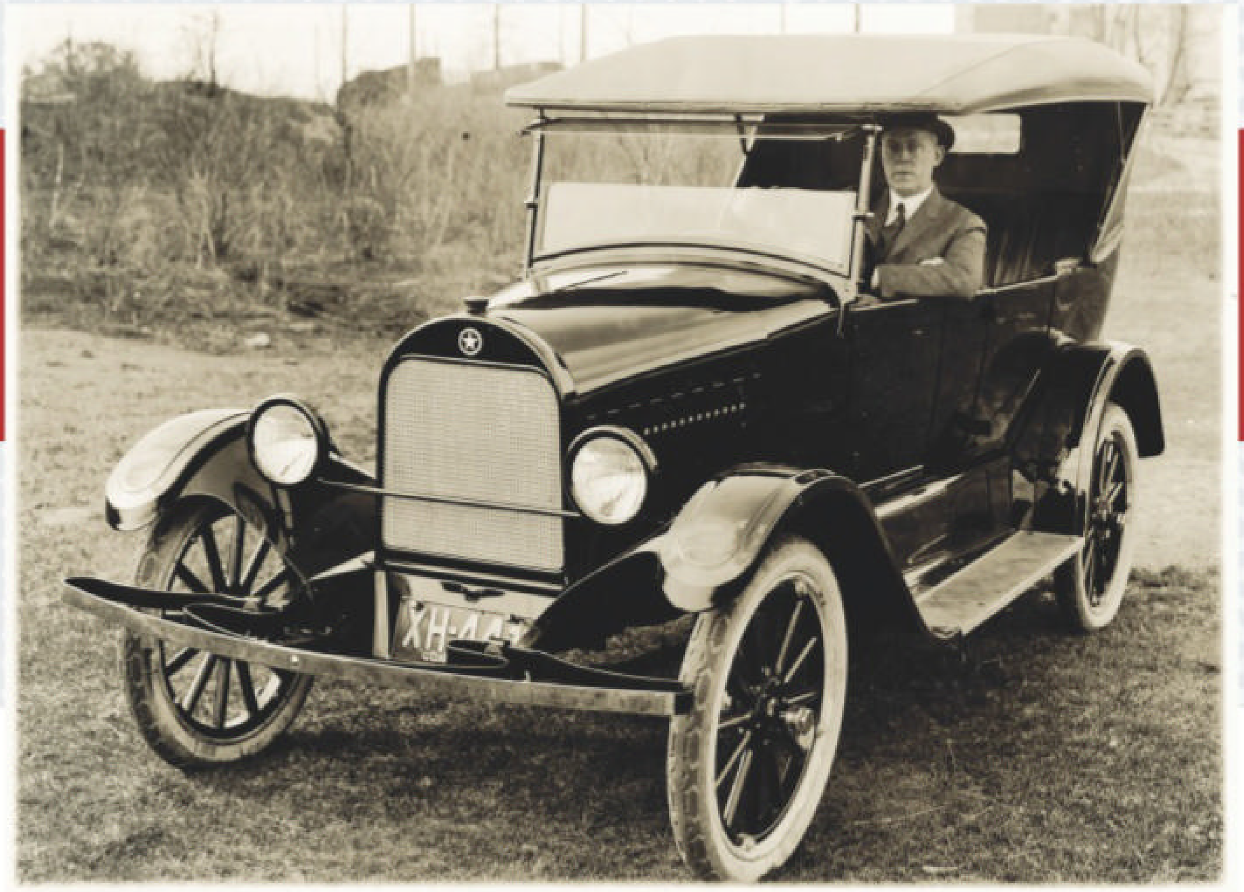
Emblazoned on the side of the old General Motors building in Detroit are a series of large letter D's that have left many a passerby wondering what they have to do with GM. They were put there to honor William Durant, the man who created General Motors, by the same people who pushed him out of General Motors.

Billy Durant is a legend; he's the man who envisioned an enormous automobile company before anyone was even certain the automobile was here to stay. While co-owner of a large horse-drawn-wagon manufacturing company in Flint, Michigan, Durant invested in David Buick's struggling car company and used it as the foundation of an empire. He was a better visionary than he was a manager, however, and in 1912 his nascent General Motors got into financial troubles as a result of Durant's frenetic buying of component makers and acquisition of questionable car companies like Elmore, Cartercar, and the Welch Motor Car Company (to name a few), all of which were tremendous money losers. Durant was soon forced to relinquish control.

Overthrown but unfazed, Durant invested in a new car called the Chevrolet, named for a popular race car driver of the day. He had the car redesigned for the low-price field and built up Chevrolet's sales organization, making the company the darling of Wall Street. With a stunning, well-engineered rise in stock value, Durant was able to regain control of GM in 1916. His profligate spending got him into trouble again and he was ousted from GM once more in 1920, this time for good.

Durant bounced back with an idea for yet another empire, one much like the GM model: He would offer a low-priced car to compete with Ford's Model T, then another car to fit in the low-to-medium-





Billy Durant's entry into the lowest-price field was the Star automobile. The 1923 four-door sedan (above) was a handsome, study-looking machine with fully enclosed body work. The touring car (right) fit into the 1923 line as a lower-priced body style.

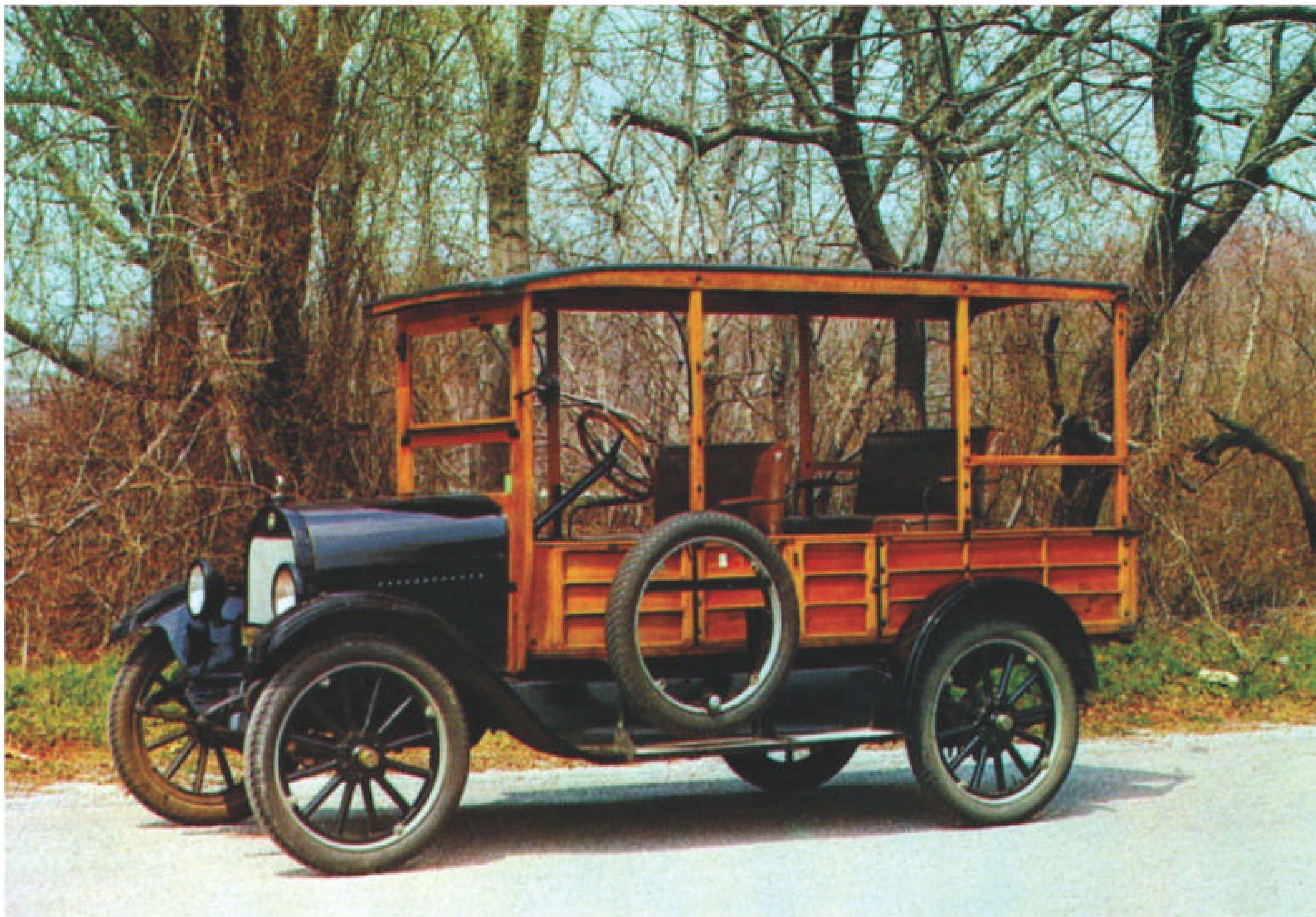
priced field along the lines of Oakland. Durant also intended to offer a high-price luxury prestige car, plus whatever else happened to come up for sale.

He called the company Durant Motors so everyone would know that one of the industry's legends was behind it. Founded in January 1921, it initially had just one car: the Durant. By the following year there were two more brands. The most important was the Star, the other was bankrupt luxury-car producer Locomobile, which Durant bought at a liquidation auction.

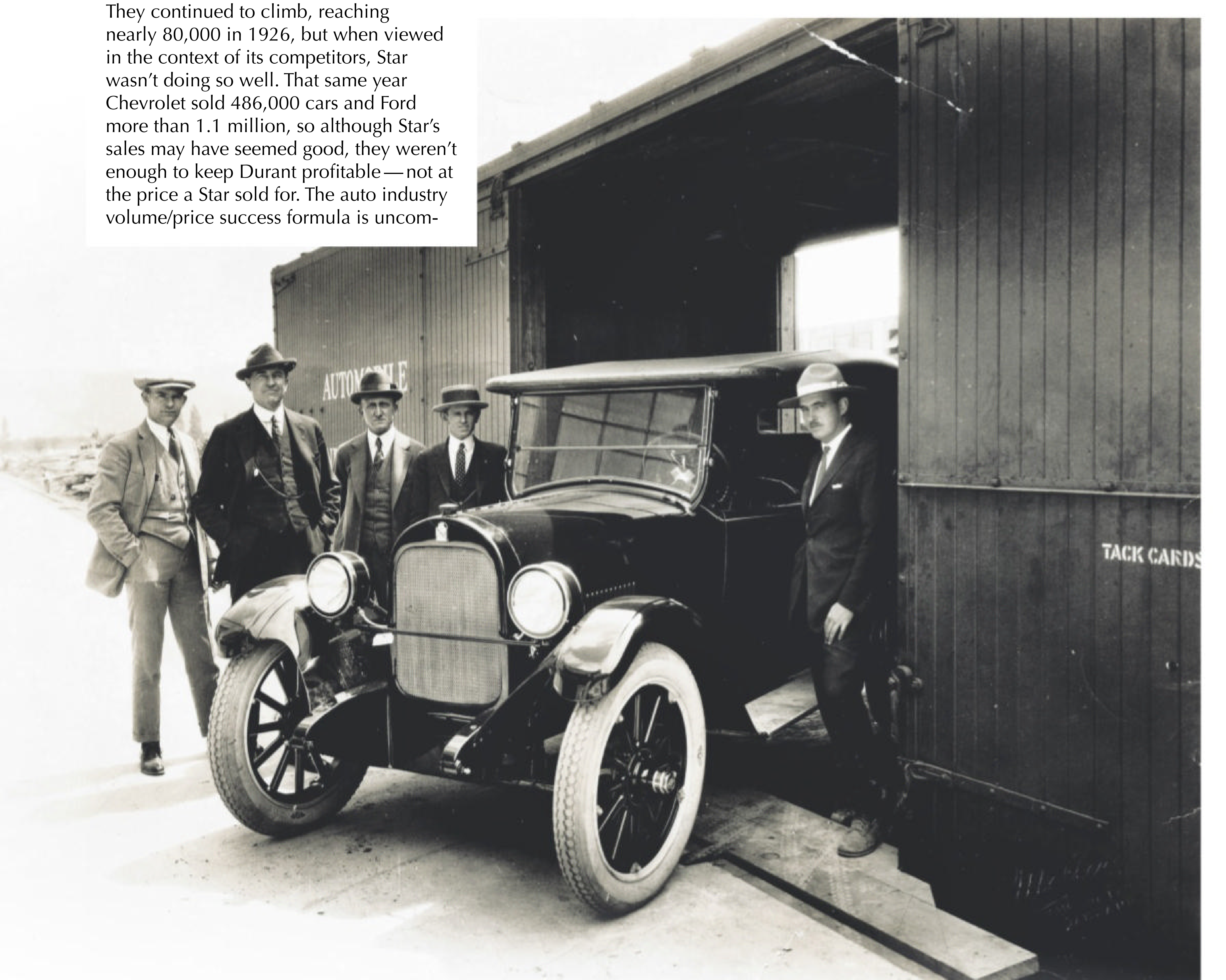
As the ads claimed, the Durant was a solid car, powered by a 35-hp Continental four-cylinder engine and riding on a 109-inch wheelbase. The touring car was priced at $890, or for $1,365, one could buy either the four-passenger coupe or a five-passenger sedan, all assembled in a new plant in Long Island City, New York. In February 1922, the Durant Six joined the line, powered by a 70-hp Ansted six-cylinder engine. Four body styles were offered in the Six series: a roadster priced at $1,600, a touring at $1,650, a coupe at $2,250, and a five-passenger sedan at $2,400. The last was priced higher than comparable Oaklands, but the Durant Six was a bigger car, riding a 123.5-inch wheelbase. The four-cylinder and six-cylinder Durants carried over into 1923 with minor changes, including a new roadster added to the four-cylinder line. Things were going well, and on March 27, 1923, Durant Motors produced its 100,000th car.

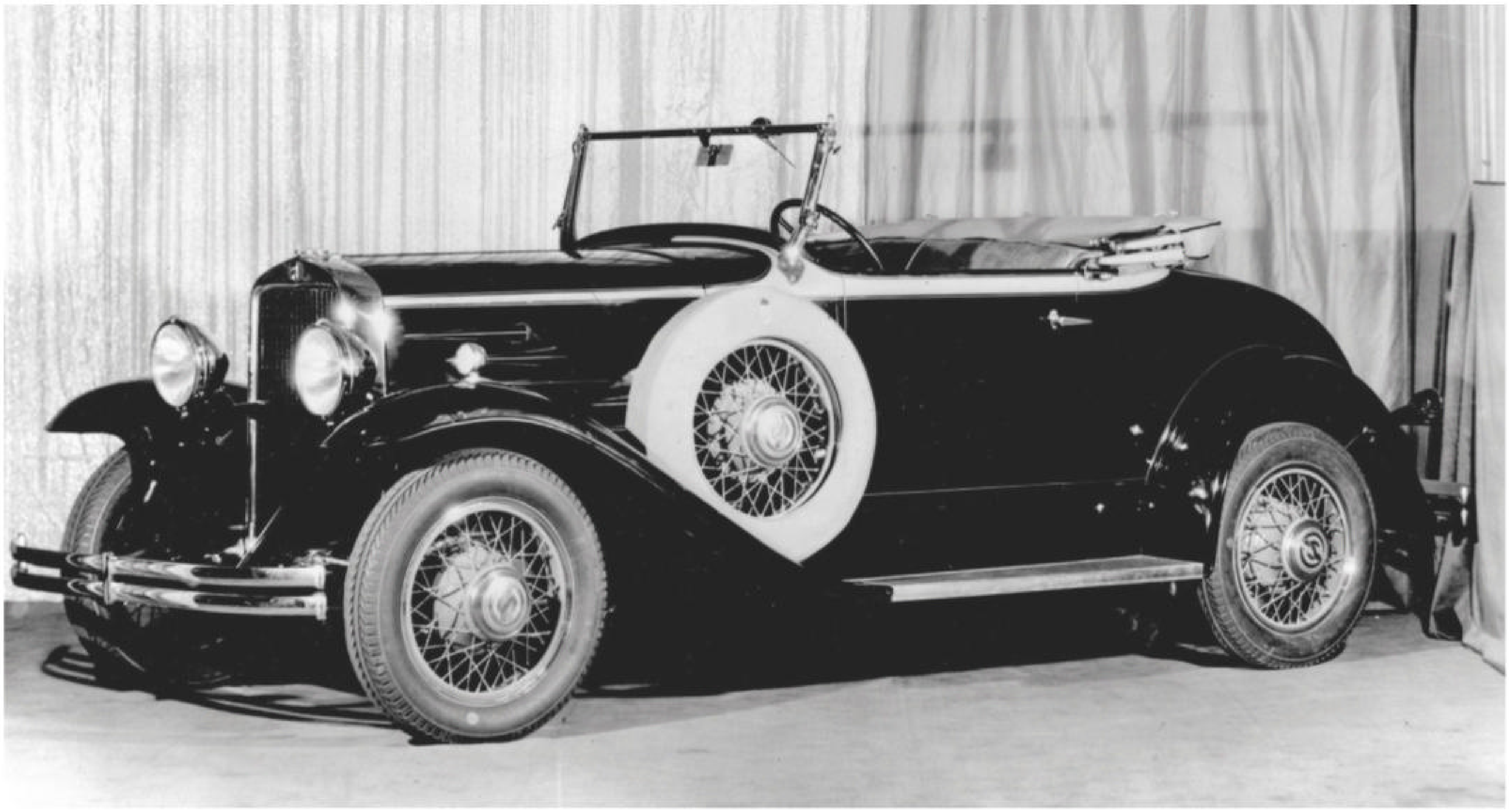
One reason for that high number was that, for 1922, Durant Motors introduced the Star, the company's entry-level car. Designed to compete with Ford's Model T, it was what was known as an "assembled car," meaning that most of its parts were purchased from outside vendors rather than manufactured by Durant. Powered by a Continental four-cylinder, the Star's bodies were produced by Hayes-Hunt, with carburetors by Tillotson, and the battery and coil by Auto Lite. Pricing started out at $348 for a basic touring car, or $443 with electric starter and demountable rims, which, of course, everyone wanted. That pricing positioned the Star between the Model T and the Chevrolet 490.

The Star was a solid, well-built car meant to be Durant's volume seller and sales got off to a good start, probably propelled by Durant's fame as an automaker. Some 75,000 were sold during the calendar year 1923. Sales dipped to about 62,000 in 1924 before bouncing back to top 70,000 cars again in 1925. They continued to climb, reaching nearly 80,000 in 1926, but when viewed in the context of its competitors, Star wasn't doing so well. That same year Chevrolet sold 486,000 cars and Ford more than 1.1 million, so although Star's sales may have seemed good, they weren't enough to keep Durant profitable — not at the price a Star sold for. The auto industry volume/price success formula is uncom-



The first American automaker to offer a factory-built station wagon was Durant Motors, which introduced this Star station wagon for 1923.





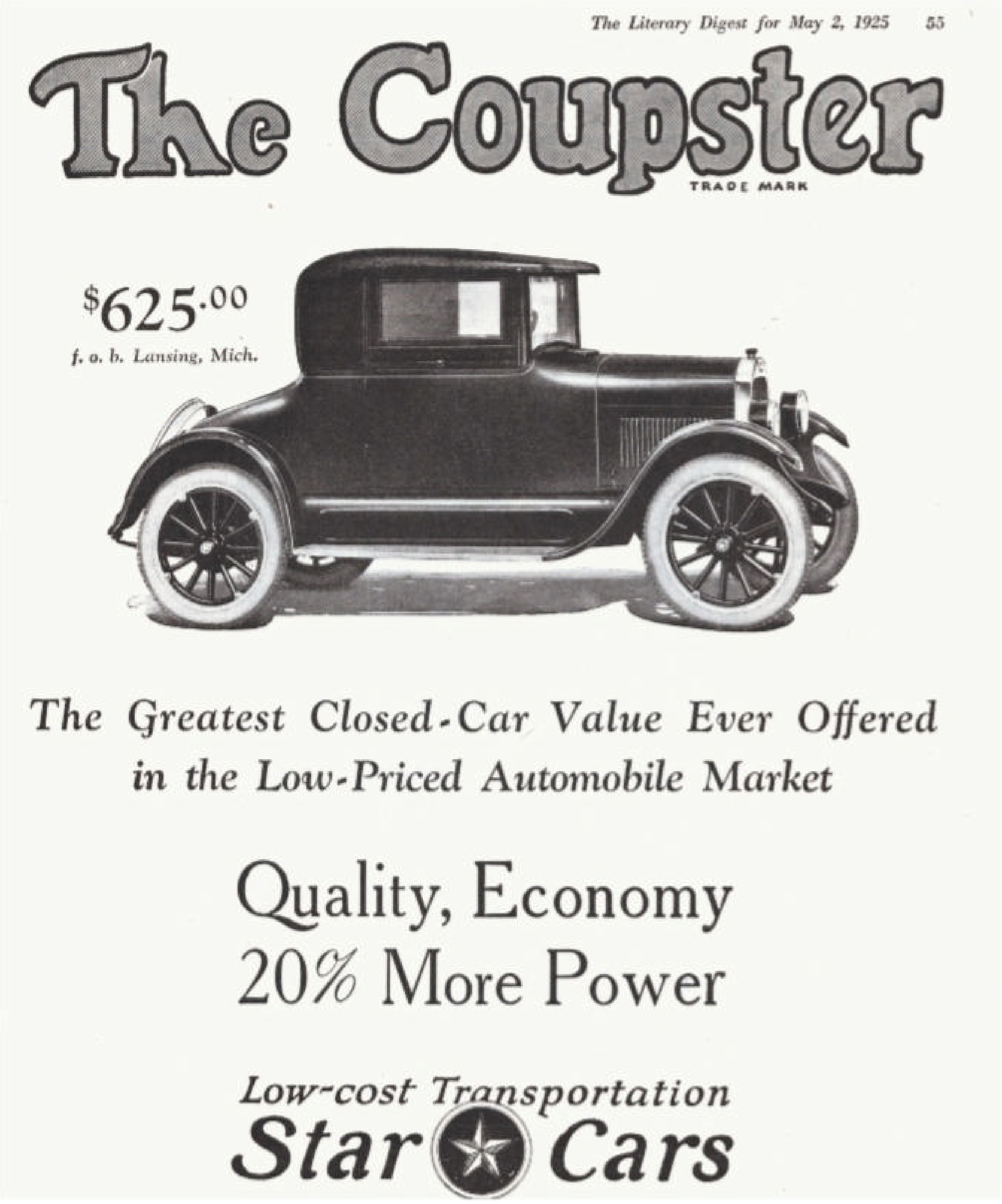
The 1930 Durant Model 614, a six-cylinder roadster, was a very stylish car and should have sold better than it did. But the public had lost confidence in Billy Durant's company, and in Durant himself.

plicated: a company needs to produce and sell a high volume of cars in order to price them low. The numbers just weren't working for the Star.

Meanwhile, the Durant was also floundering. It got off to an excellent start, selling 21,600 cars in 1922, which was more than Oakland, Oldsmobile, Hudson, or Hupmobile could say. In 1923, sales climbed to more than 30,000 cars, but the following year they plunged to under 10,000 units.

The big problem with the Durant and the Star, as well as other Durant Motors brands including the Mason truck, Flint automobile (we'll cover that another time), Locomobile, and the stillborn Eagle and Princeton cars, was that Billy Durant had a new attraction taking up most of his time, attention, and capital: the stock market. Durant was in love with Wall Street. He oversaw billions in investments during an era when a million dollars was a huge deal. He was good at it, too—for a while, anyway. On Wall Street they called him "the bull of bulls." His desk overflowed with ringing telephones Durant would answer all day long, buying this, selling that, making millions for himself and his friends. However, he ended up shortchanging the investors in Durant Motors. He gave too little attention to its products and, especially, to the company's expenses.

By 1926, Durant was running out of capital. He sold his Flint, Michigan, plant to GM; the following year he sold the



The Literary Digest for May 2, 1925 55

The Coupster

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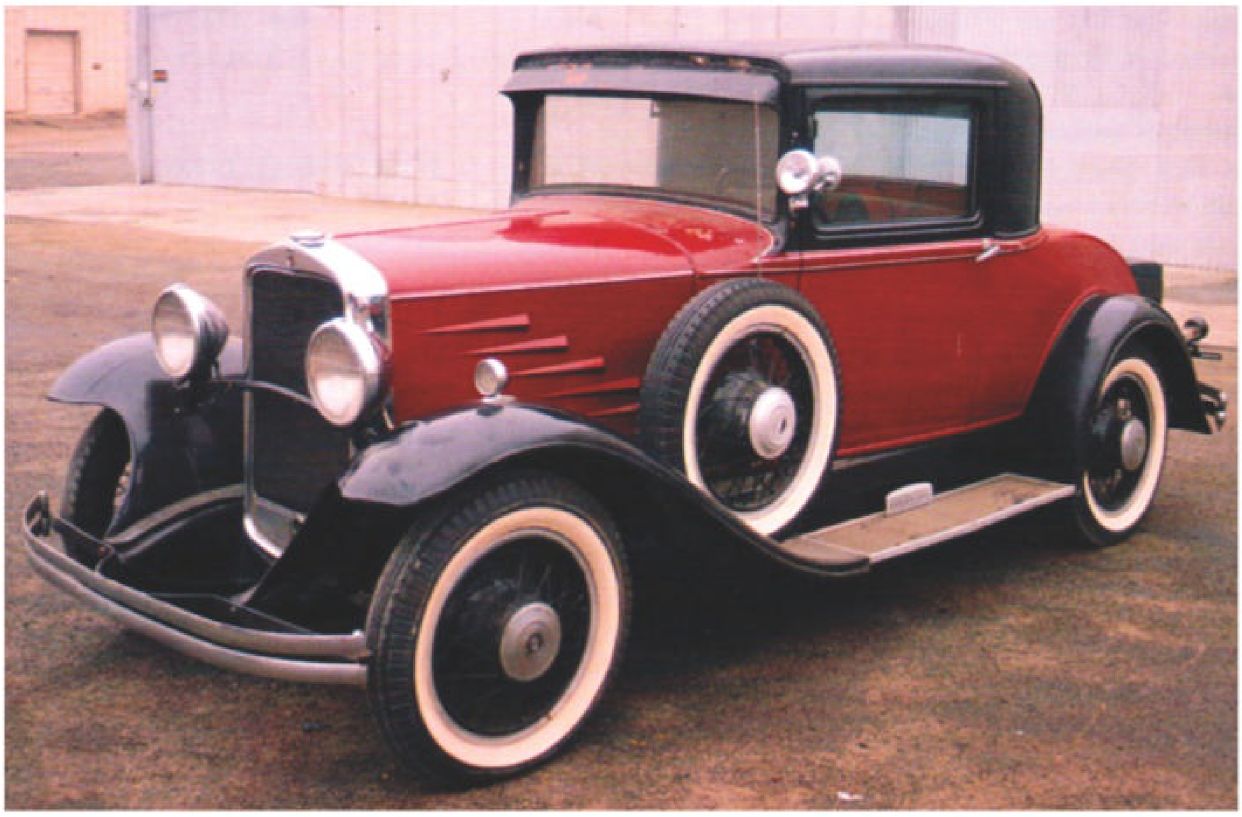
Long Island City plant to Ford. There was no Durant car production in 1927, though it restarted for 1928 with an all-new car. Production of the Flint automobile ended after the '27 model year. For a time, Durant talked of adding Moon, Chandler, Hupmobile, and other smaller makes to his company roster, but nothing came of it. His credibility was in question.

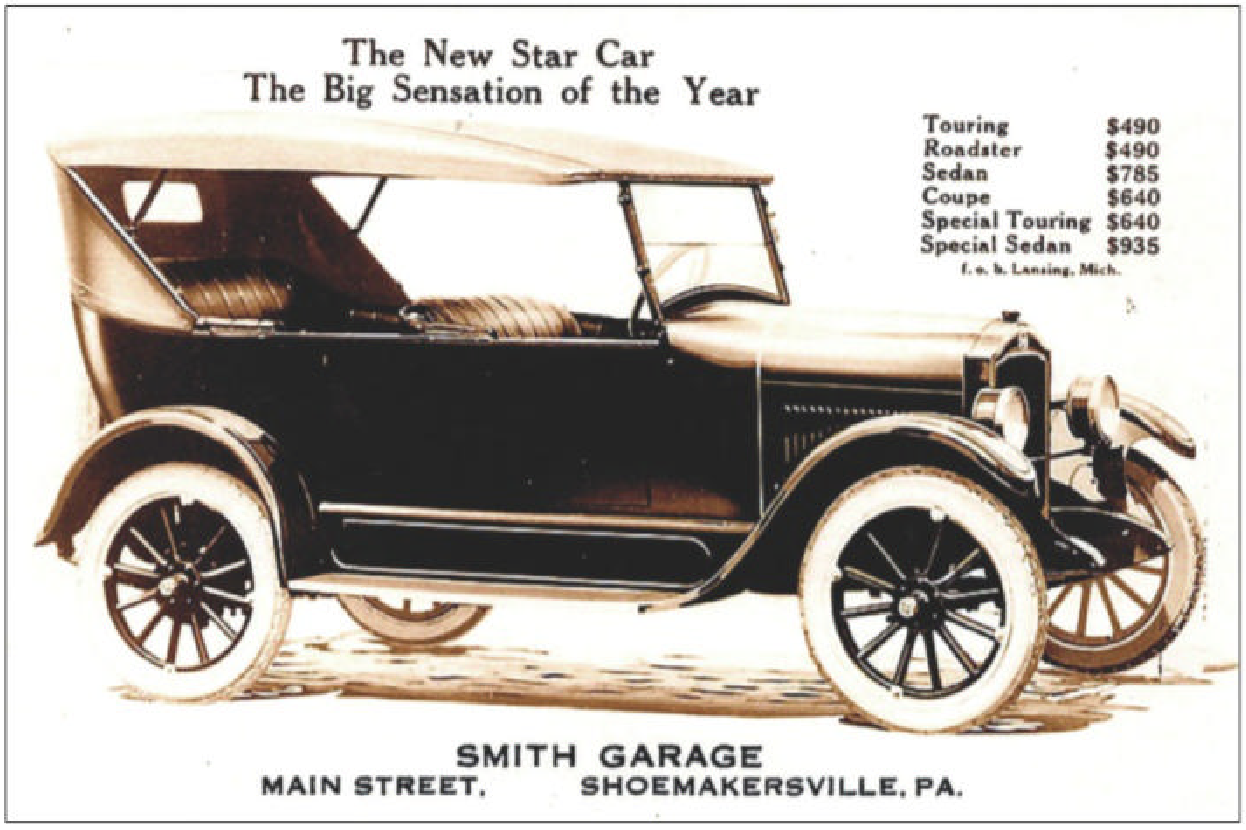
Meanwhile, the Star was also being phased out. In 1929, the Star Four became the Durant 4-40. The company also introduced new Durant models 55, 65, and 75, handsome cars offering a good value. However, during the year only 48,000 Durants were sold, compared to more than 71,000 Stars and Durants in 1928. During 1929 Locomobile also folded. Durant's company was rapidly sinking.

By the time the Great Depression began at the tail end of 1929, Durant Motors was already struggling to survive. Billy Durant had finally put his focus into saving Durant Motors, but the attention came too late. The company was short of capital; its future was just not meant to be. Despite fielding some nice automobiles in the period from 1930 to 1932, sales never came close to breaking even for the company. Durant Motors ceased production for good in 1932 and went into receivership.

The Great Depression wiped out Billy Durant. He never rejoined the industry he'd done so much to create. He lived the rest of his years struggling to get by, sometimes through monetary gifts from his old GM associates, the rest from small real-estate ventures in Flint. It was a long, hard fall for the one-time titan, but he took it in stride, never once complaining. Durant passed away at age 85 in 1947.



By 1930 the Star had faded away, but the Durant brand soldiered on, offering a range of four- and six-cylinder cars. Shown is a 1930 Durant six-cylinder coupe.



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f. o. b. Lansing, Mich.

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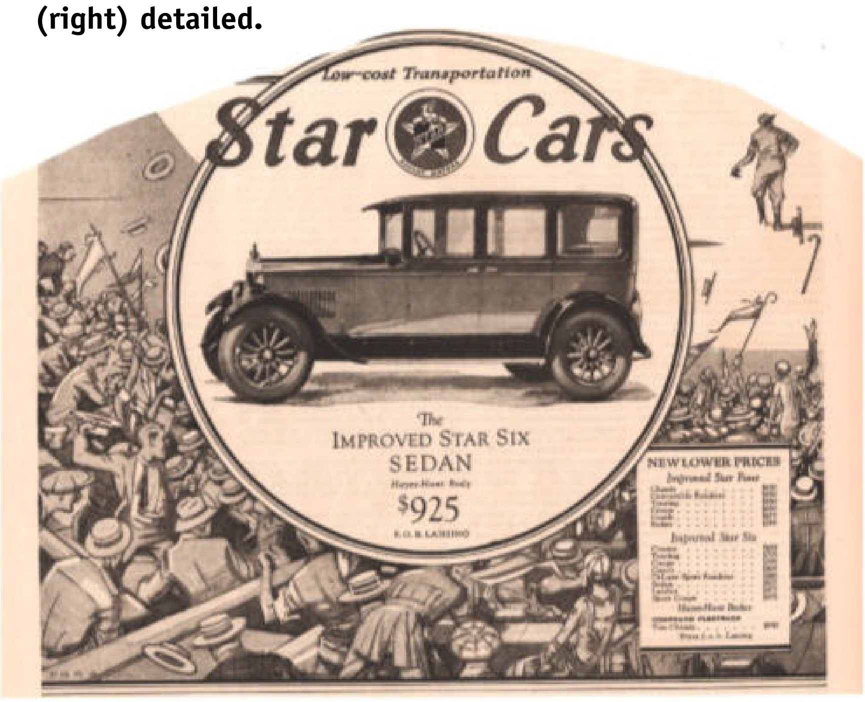
The lineup of 1924 Star cars was impressive, with six distinct models and four body styles. The touring car (above) sold for just $490. However, as Ford continued reducing its pricing, Star went in the other direction due to its lower volume, as later advertising (right) detailed.



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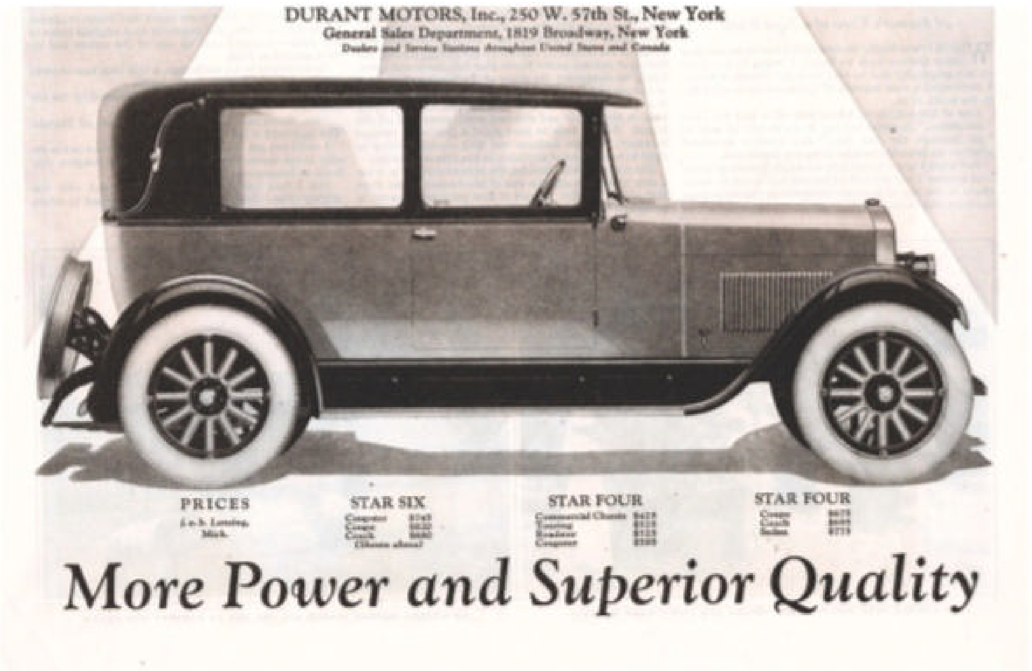

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Sheetmetal **Done Right**

Panel repair and replacement tips for the novice

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM SMART

Sheetmetal fabrication and replacement mystifies a lot of us because it takes talent and patience to achieve the desired results. It also takes experience. However, every skill we learn has to start somewhere, and panel replacement is something you can learn both by doing and by watching others who know how to do it well. We're going to illustrate how to patch and replace panels yourself in your home garage. To get there, you're going to have to invest in, or rent, tools to do the job.

Right off the top is a big one: You're going to need a light-duty wire-feed MIG welder, which will enable you to stitch and "rosette" weld (also known as plug welding) sheetmetal components using household current. You're also going to need the tools of sheetmetal repair, and that list can get lengthy—a grinder with a variety of discs, body hammers and dollies, aviation snips, clamps of various types, a ½-inch drill and drill index, and a variety of putty knives and spreaders with which to apply filler. Don't forget eye and face shields along with work gloves to protect your hands. Of course, you're bound to discover more needs as you go to work.

If you're replacing entire body panels, it is strongly suggested you stick with the factory seams and avoid creating new "butt joints," where the ends of two pieces of sheetmetal are butted together and welded. Although this is common practice for body technicians, it takes a lot of skill and experience to know how to successfully conceal a butt joint and to make sure it won't reveal itself later. For the novice, butt joints can create problems later on, especially if they can be seen in the paint. Overlapping of the welded joints can be easier to execute during the welding phase, but this will usually require more filler work afterwards to conceal, which may also result in problems later.

Still, there are likely to be situations where a butt joint is unavoidable, as when using a steel patch panel. Patience is required—if you're hurrying and get the metal too hot, the result will be excessive distortion (waviness) of the metal, necessitating more bodywork later, likely requiring more filler. It is best to "touch" or "stitch" weld to join the two pieces to achieve the initial bond. Then, you can go back and fill between the welds. This technique should help you achieve a better joint with minimal—or no—distortion.

Most car bodies were spot-welded together at the factory to begin with. Spot welding is a type of electrical resistance welding that joins two or more pieces of steel between two clamping electrodes—it yields a weld at the "spot" where the two electrodes pinch the pieces of metal together. When the electrodes are electrified, the resistance between them briefly creates heat so extreme that the pieces of metal fuse together in a molten puddle and the material of the adjoining pieces of metal melt together. The spot welds are around 5/16- to 3/8-inch in diameter.

When you separate and replace panels at the factory seams, you can use a spot welder, or you can use the aforementioned rosette/plug weld technique. With this approach, ¼- to ½-inch holes are drilled along the seams of the replacement panel, and then the two adjoining panels are clamped together. The holes are then welded with a wire-feed MIG welder around the perimeter of the holes until they are filled. Once welding is complete, each weld is finished with a grinder to smooth the rosette weld. This can be done so that the welds disappear (some filler work may be needed for this), or you can simulate factory spot welds by using a center punch after grinding the rosette weld.

When you replace a panel, corrosion protection should be a high priority. Because it won't be possible to apply paint to all of the bare metal of a pinch weld, weld-through primer is often recommended to ward off future rust. The weld-through primer is sprayed prior to welding but doesn't hinder the process.

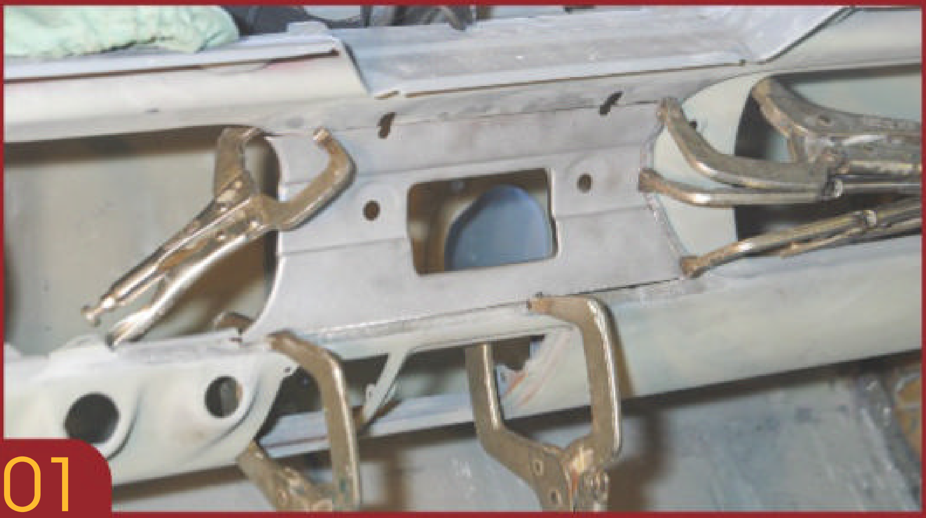
The most important tools you must have in your arsenal are patience and the willingness to learn. You must be willing to stop and rethink what you are doing. If something doesn't look right, back up and ask yourself why it doesn't look right. Keep tabs on sample bodies near you to use for reference. Take lots of pictures of similar vehicle bodies to see how things go together. Don't trust your memory—chances are good that more time will pass between disassembly and reassembly, and that's when memories can fade. Reference pictures can serve as a welcome guide when fuzzy recollections don't provide the answers needed.

Sheetmetal replacement can be as simple as a patch job or as involved as this inner fender/shock tower replacement. Although this looks intimidating, it really is something the home restorer can do successfully. Stick with factory seams, measure as accurately as possible, and do a mock-up of the parts before welding.

Speaking of measuring accurately, this can prove to be a real challenge. Make sure you use the same tape measure/steel ruler throughout — minor inaccuracies between measuring devices can cause headaches when doing this type of work. Use a factory shop manual to get OEM dimension specifications before getting started.

Dashboard Patch Job

PEOPLE SOMETIMES HACK UP DASHBOARDS WHILE INSTALLING aftermarket sound systems and other ill-advised accessories. We've seen all kinds of hatchet jobs on vintage cars. This is a classic Mustang dashboard that has been hacked to excess. The Restomod Shop in Stockton, California, demonstrates how they got it back to factory original, eliminating any evidence of damage while avoiding the need for total replacement.



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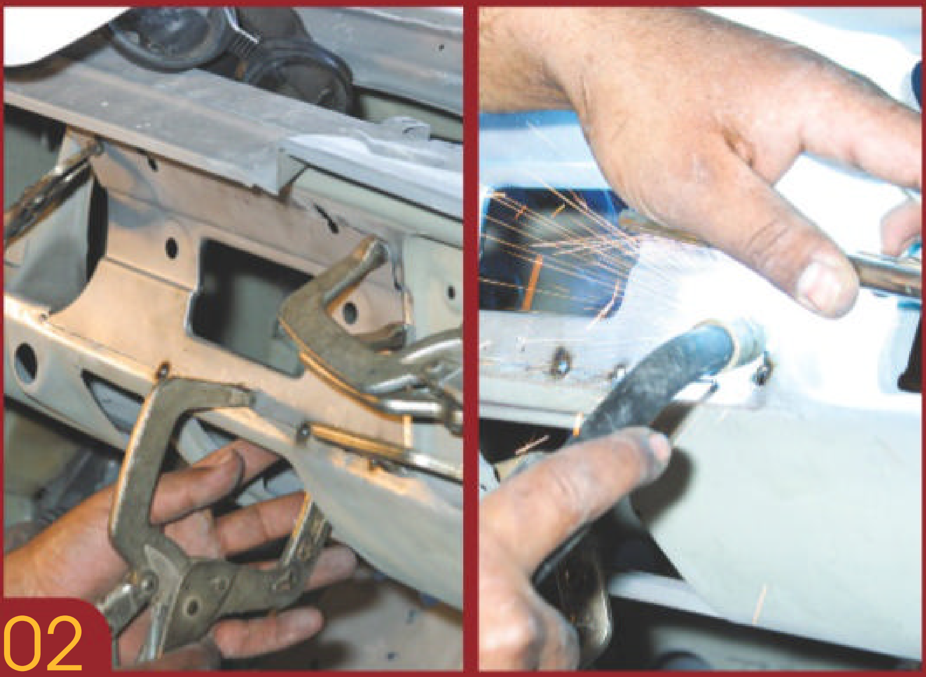

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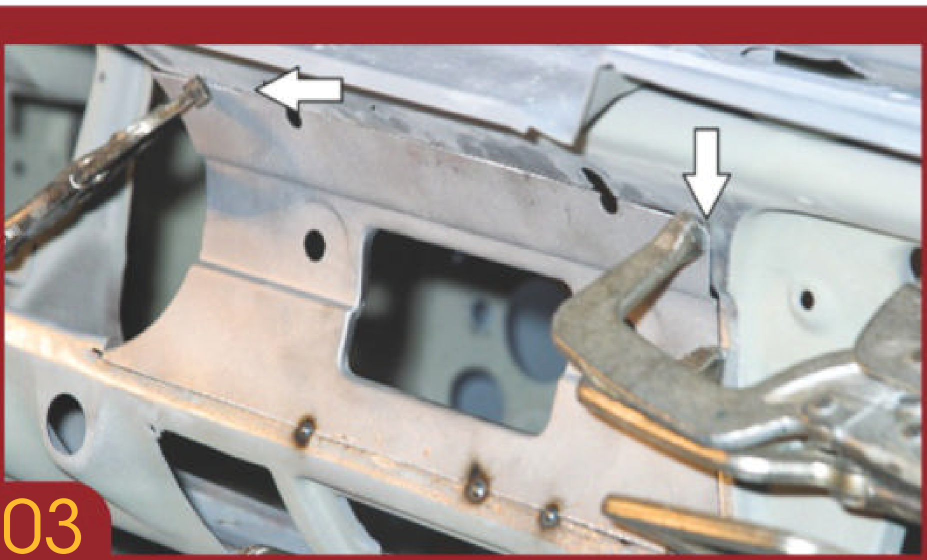

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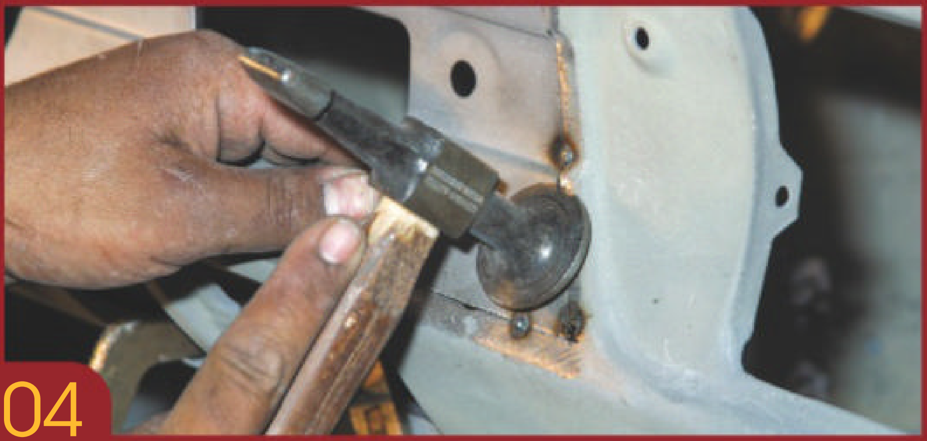

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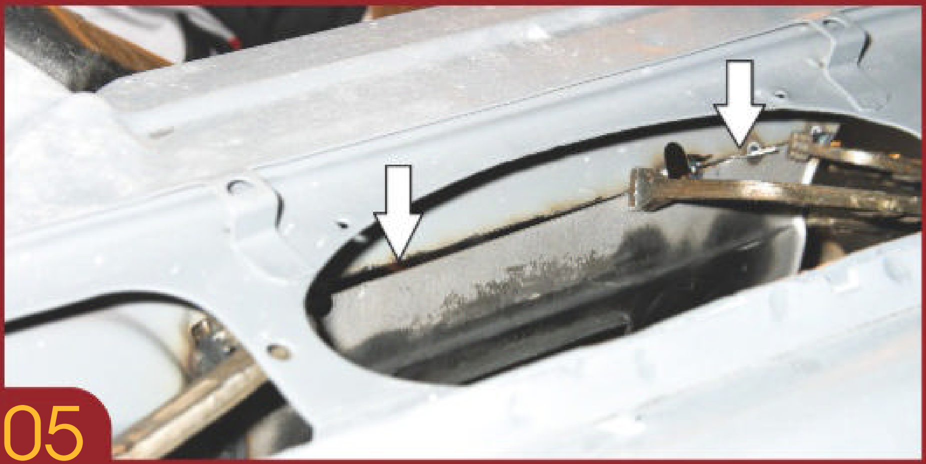
1. There is a catch to this repair: You're going to have to find a donor car so you can cut out the section of the dashboard needed to patch your own. Some classic cars have bolt-in dashboards that are easily replaced, but others, like early Mustangs and Falcons, have welded-in dashboards that have to be patched. We've chopped the center out of a junked Mustang shell to use for our project. **2.** The trick to good patching is to make sure all the seams/joints are butted — no overlapping of the pieces. This means the trimming of the patch panel must be a dead-on match for the hole it will fill. After accurately sizing the patch piece, clamp and check your seams. Then, stitch-weld in spots as shown to avoid warping. **3.** This is what you don't want — the top section has overlapping seams that will show. Grind the edges with a fine-grade disc and make sure to achieve a true butt joint. **4.** Use a body hammer and dolly to get the edges flush once they've been ground to fit.



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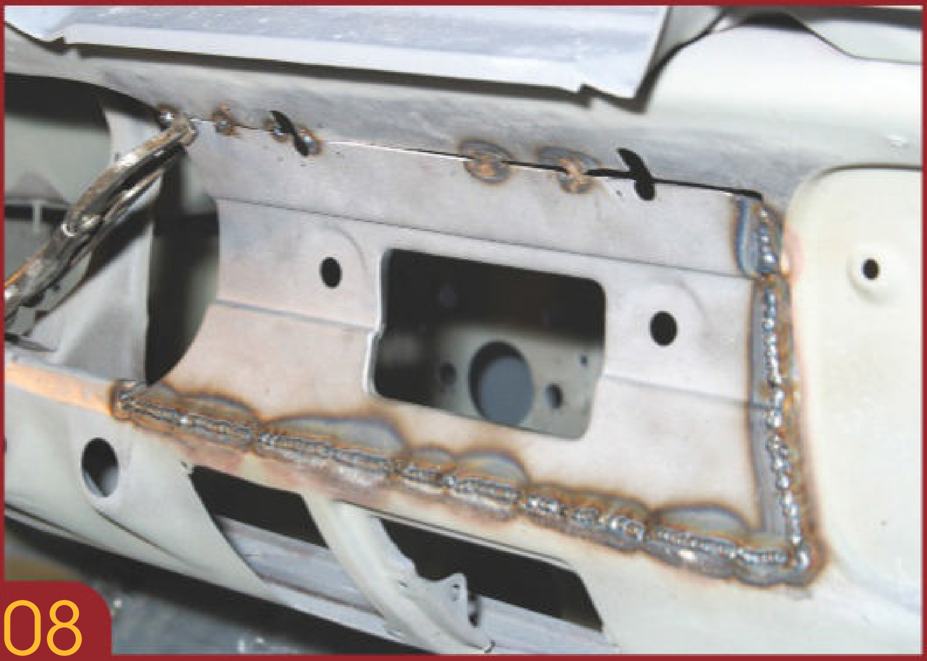
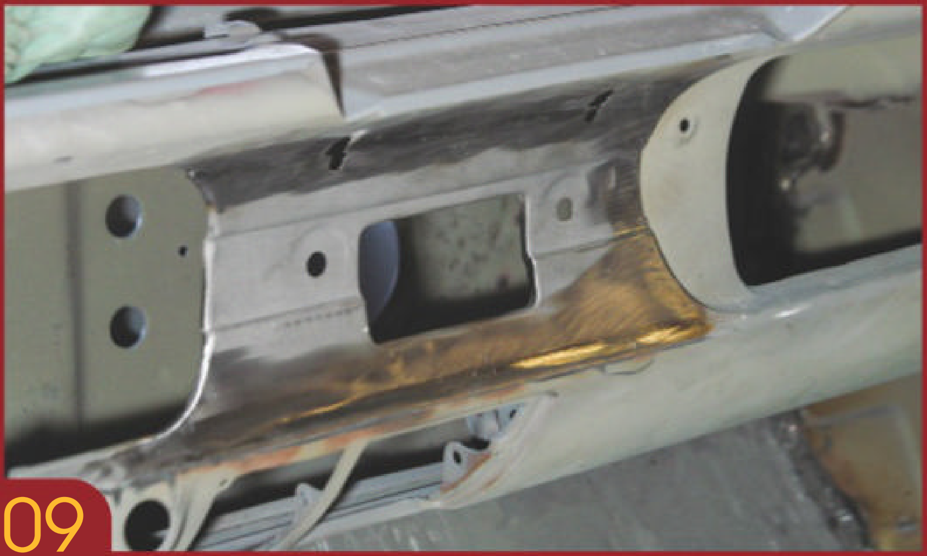
07

5. Here's a look from behind. These seams still need work to get them aligned. You may also fill in the gaps with a welder. **6.** Patching can be very tedious. Weld in baby steps to avoid distortion. **7.** As you wrap up welding, grind the welds smooth. Irregular areas can be filled with body filler and finish sanded afterwards.



08

8. The result of these modest welds is distortion-free patching. There is still welding to do along the top seam. **9.** Finish work with a rotary sanding disc gets the job done. We're ready for filler.

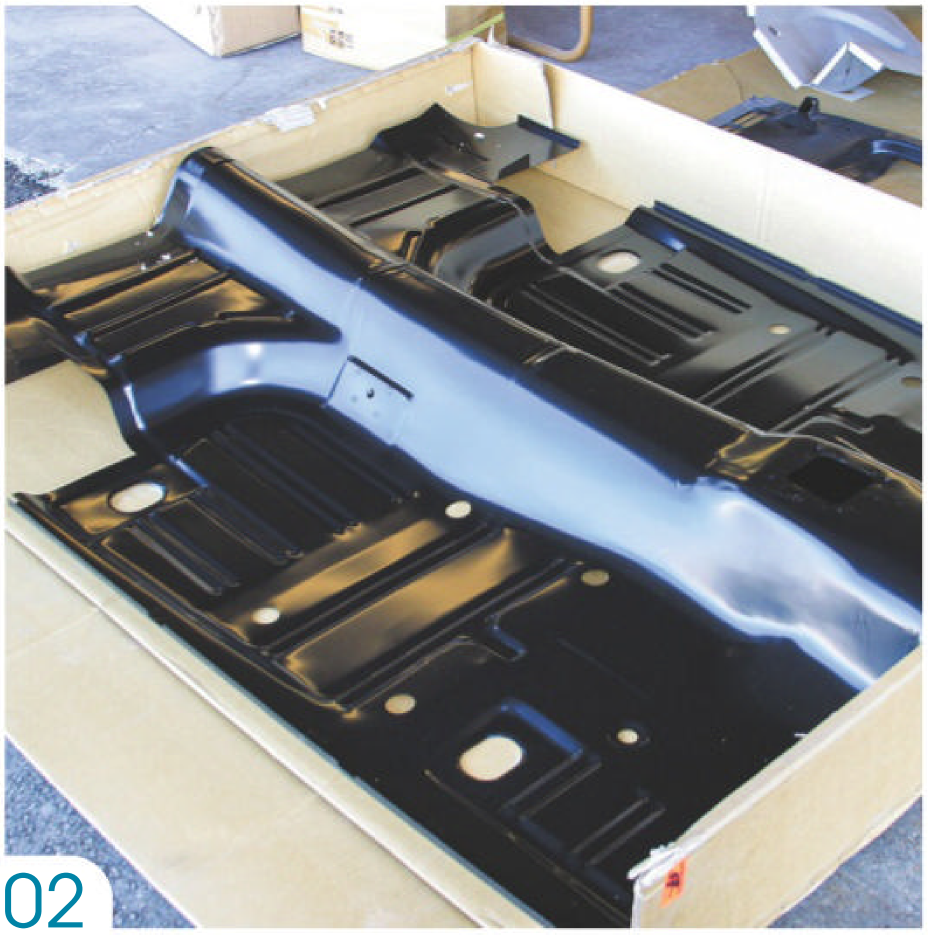


09

When Panel Replacement Goes Large

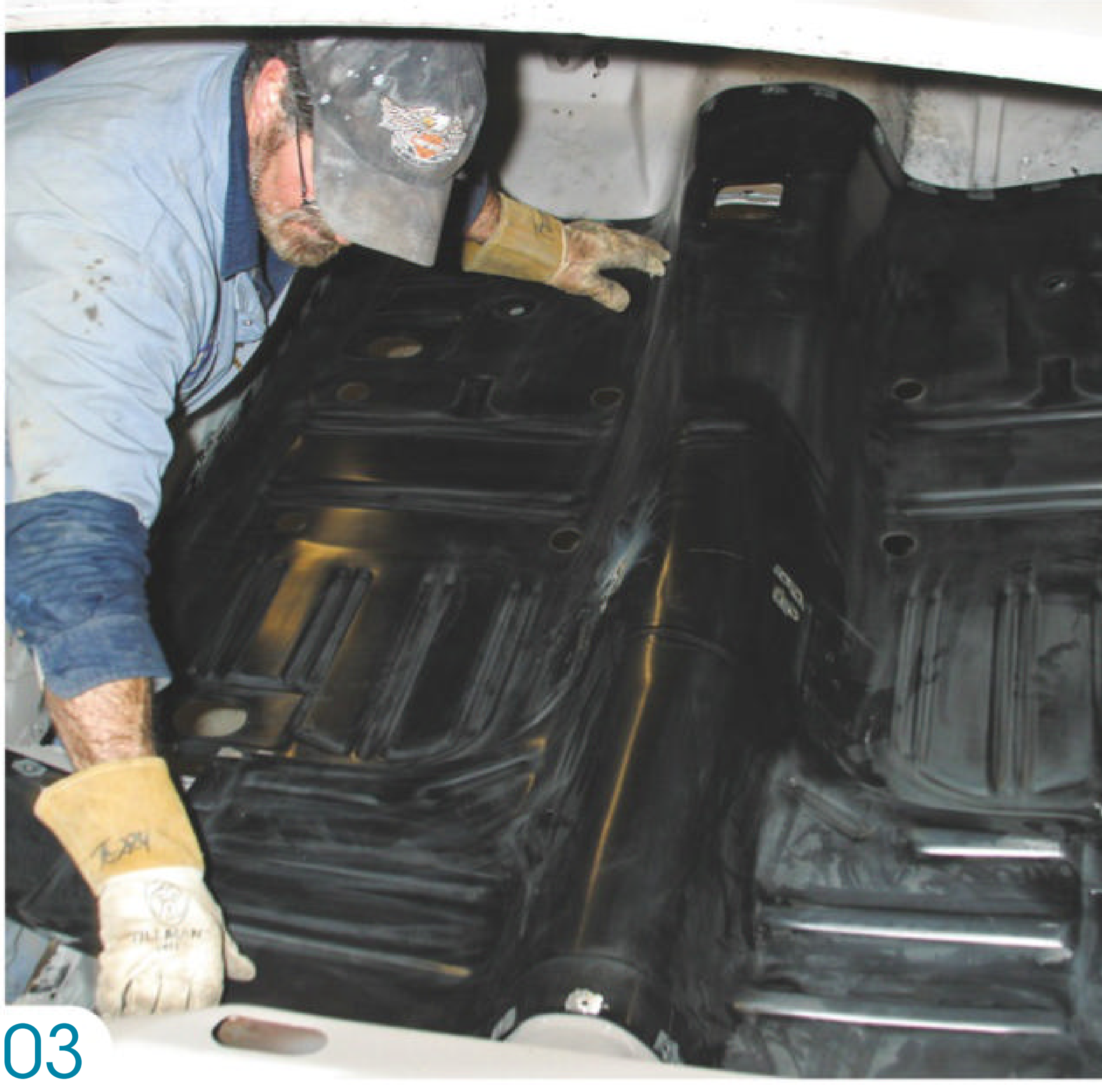
01

1. Whenever you're tackling an entire vehicle, especially one with rust issues or layers of paint and filler, seriously consider having the body shell media blasted or even chemical dipped. This gets the metal completely clean and quickly reveals what you're really dealing with. Stay away from sandblasting—it's generally too harsh for sheetmetal body panels and can result in warping. Instead, use a more metal-friendly media: baking soda, dry ice, walnut shells, and the like. Consult with a reputable media blaster for more input.



02

2. We are fortunate today that there is such a variety of reproduction sheetmetal available for vintage cars, though, of course, the more popular models are the ones that have benefitted most. For those working with cars like a Nash or a Studebaker, you will still need to find used body parts from a donor vehicle. Early Mustangs are serviced with a vast array of reproduction sheetmetal parts, like the pictured full floorpan. This can provide a fresh start for a rotten Mustang, and beats patch panels and multiple seams.



03

3. The first order of business is perform a fit check, making sure the reproduction panel ties in with all of the factory seams. Here, the factory floorpan has already been cut out. Always wear thick protective gloves when handling sheetmetal—lots of sharp edges here.

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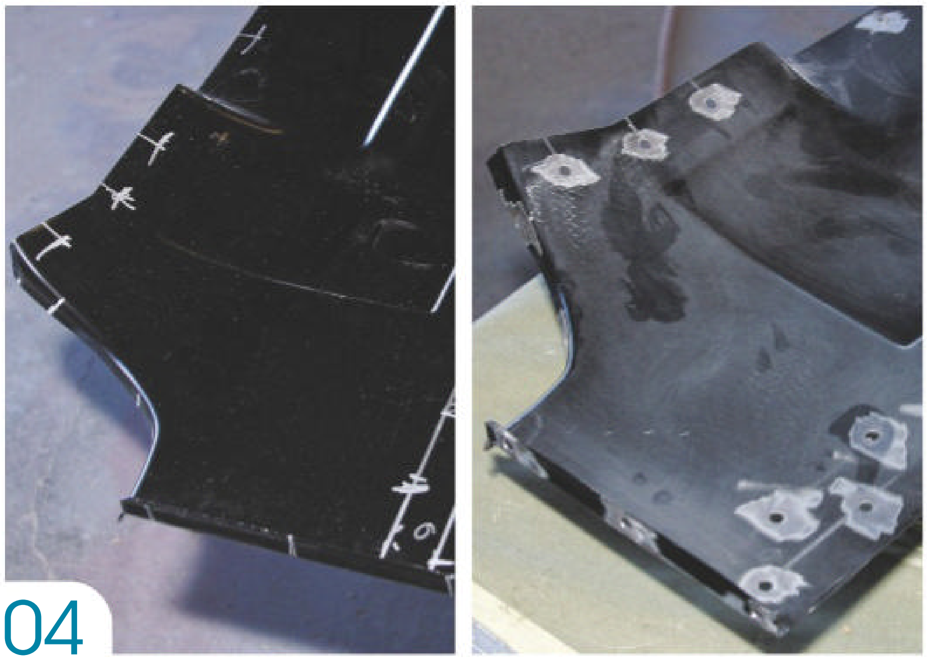
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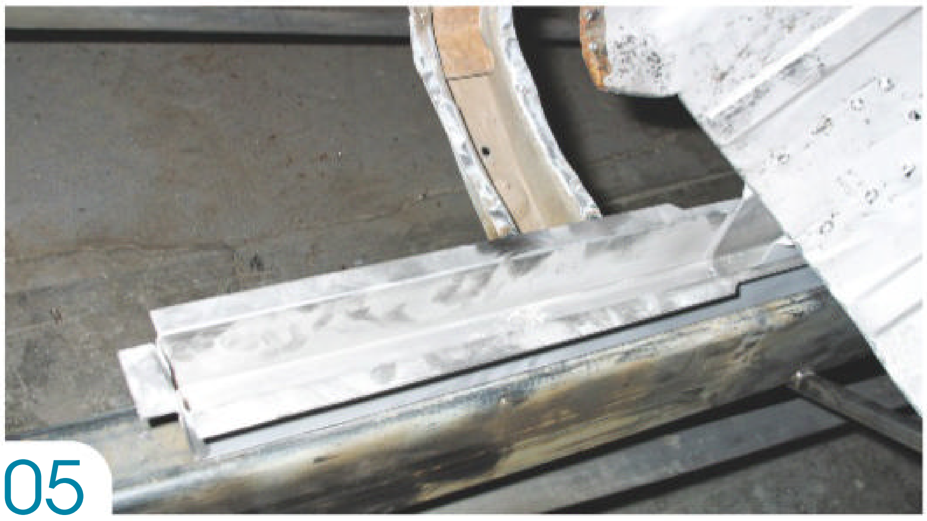
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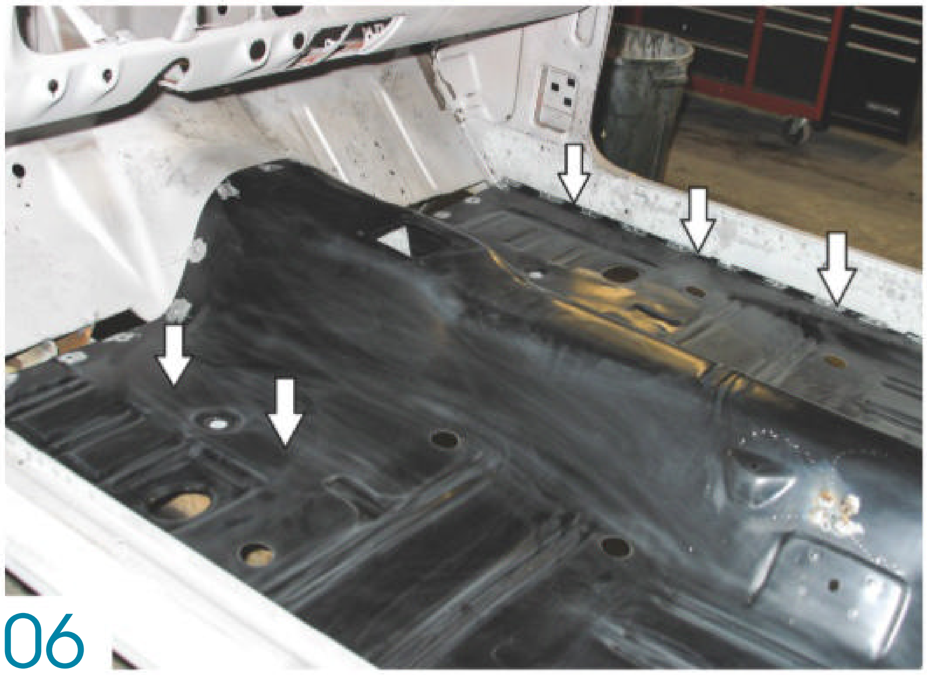
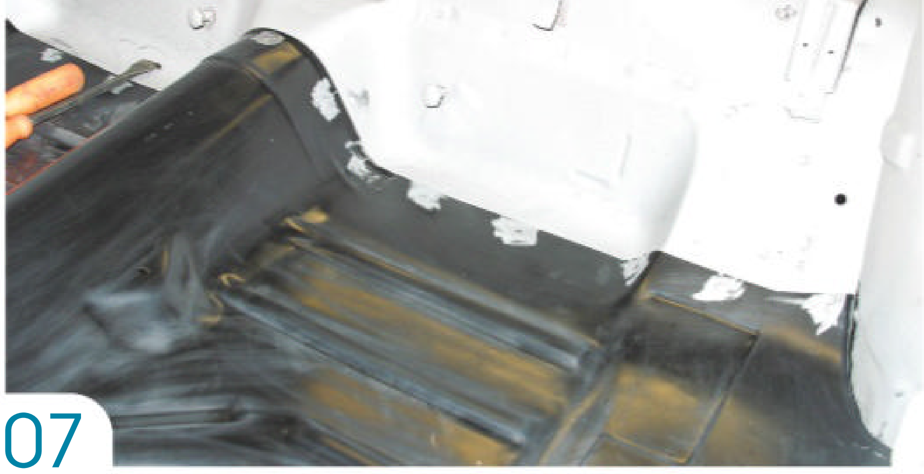
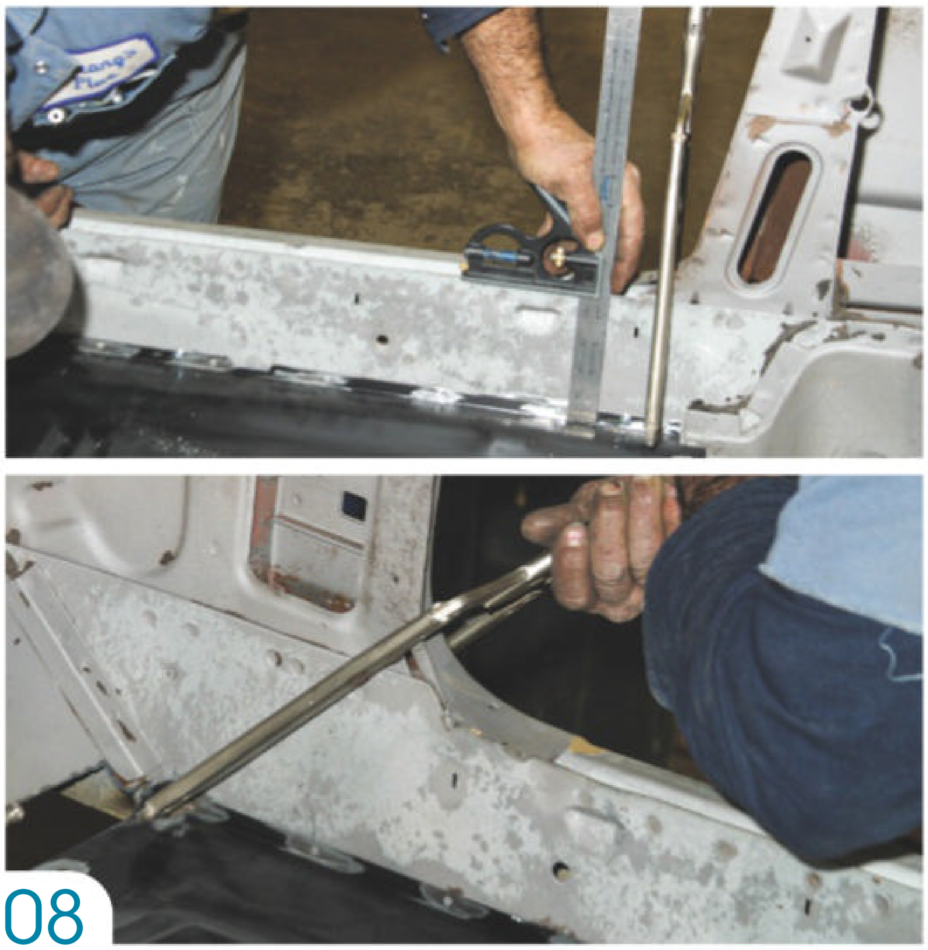

06

4. Terry Simpson of The Restomod Shop carefully marks trimming and welding locations on reproduction panels before installation begins. This reduces the potential for error before the installation becomes permanent. These are rosette weld holes that will take the place of factory spot welds. **5.** The factory floorpan has been removed, exposing the new frame rail cap and crossmember. Contact surfaces have been cleaned up for welding. It is important to have clean, raw steel to ensure weld integrity. Use weld-through primer on contact surfaces for corrosion prevention. **6.** The new pan is positioned again to confirm fit, and then additional rosette weld holes are drilled where welding will take place. Arrows indicate where the holes need to be drilled. A full floorpan is welded to the rocker panels, firewall, front frame rails, trunk pan, and rear frame rails. Close attention needs to be paid to these weld locations before the pan is permanently installed.


07

7. At this point, the rear of the full floorpan has been rosette welded to the trunk pan and rear frame rails. Remember: Weld-through primer should be applied to contact surfaces as a measure of corrosion protection. **8.** Terry stresses using sheetmetal screws and clamps to temporarily secure any panel prior to welding to confirm fit. He takes his measurements based on where the original panels were welded at the factory. Most of the time, you're going to need these large clamping pliers to secure panels before you weld. **9.** The Restomod Shop takes creative license per customer requests. This seat pan has been cut down in height to give the customer more head room. It's the sort of creative alterations a home hobbyist could add to their project after developing a bit of proficiency with sheetmetal tools and techniques.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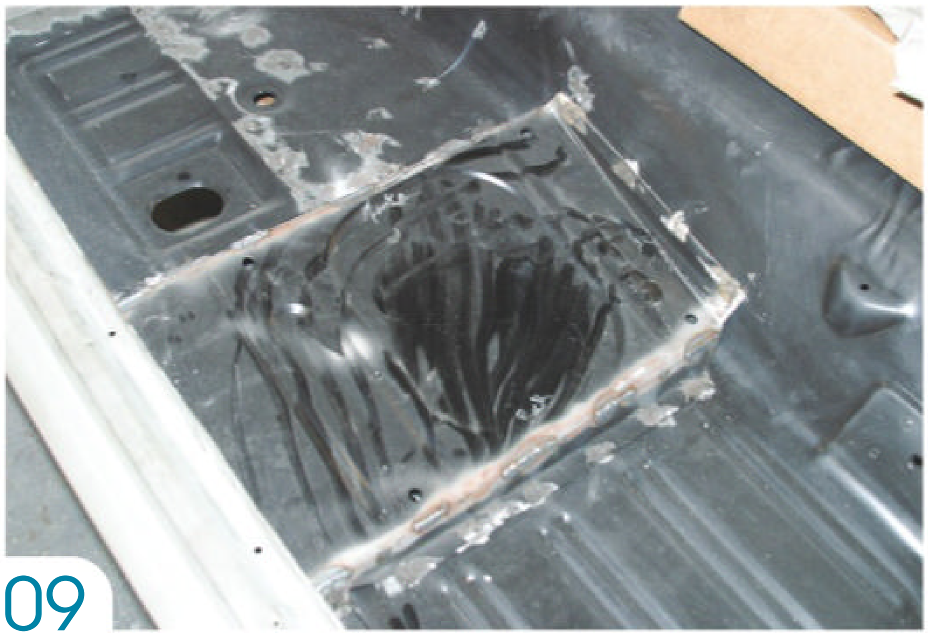
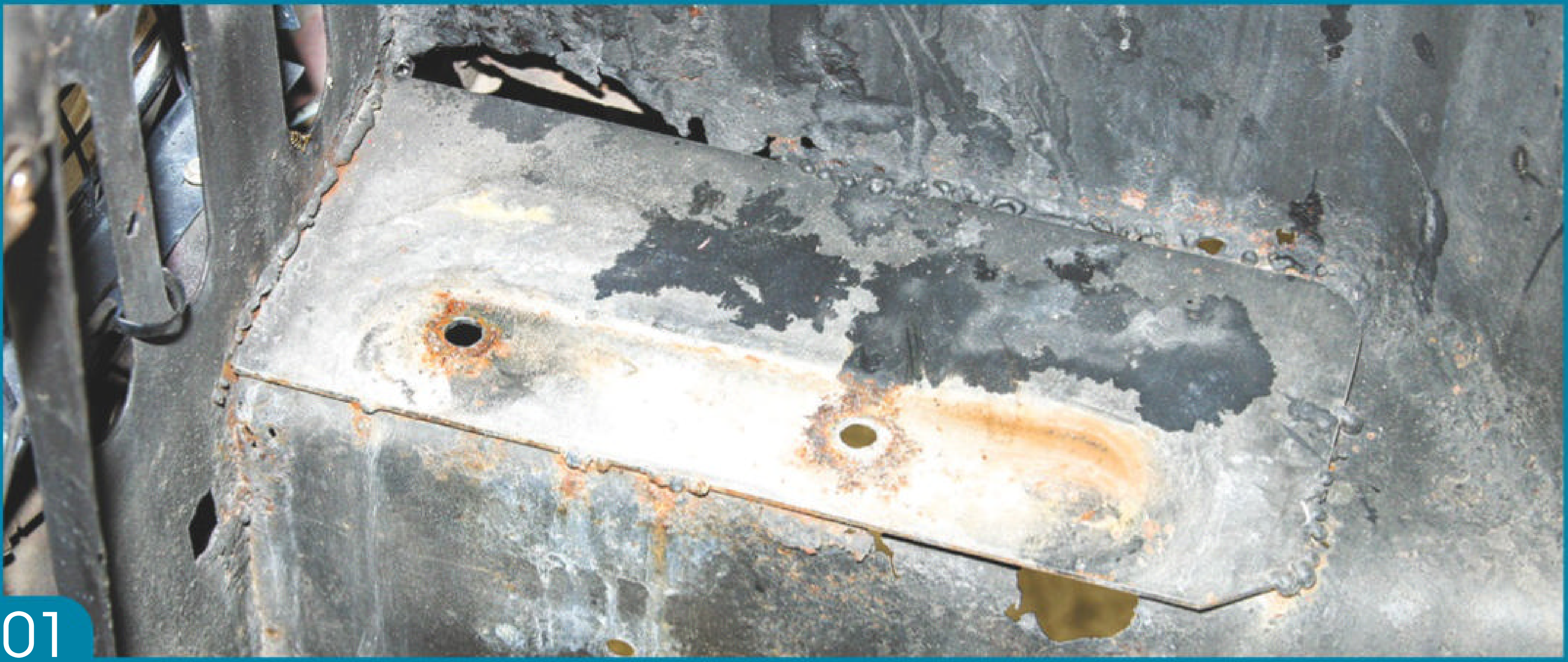

09

Quick Apron Patch

THERE ARE TIMES WITH CLASSIC CAR RUST REPAIR WHERE YOU MAY BE FACED WITH REPLACING AN ENTIRE PANEL, YET PATCHING THE EXISTING sheetmetal might be preferred for the sake of maintaining authenticity and/or originality. In this case, an inner fender apron has been heavily damaged where battery corrosion has eaten away at both the tray and the panel. The owner didn't want the apron replaced, so patching was necessary.



01

1. Our inner fender patch job begins with removal of a previous quick-fix patch job designed to keep the battery in the car. We've got a better idea.

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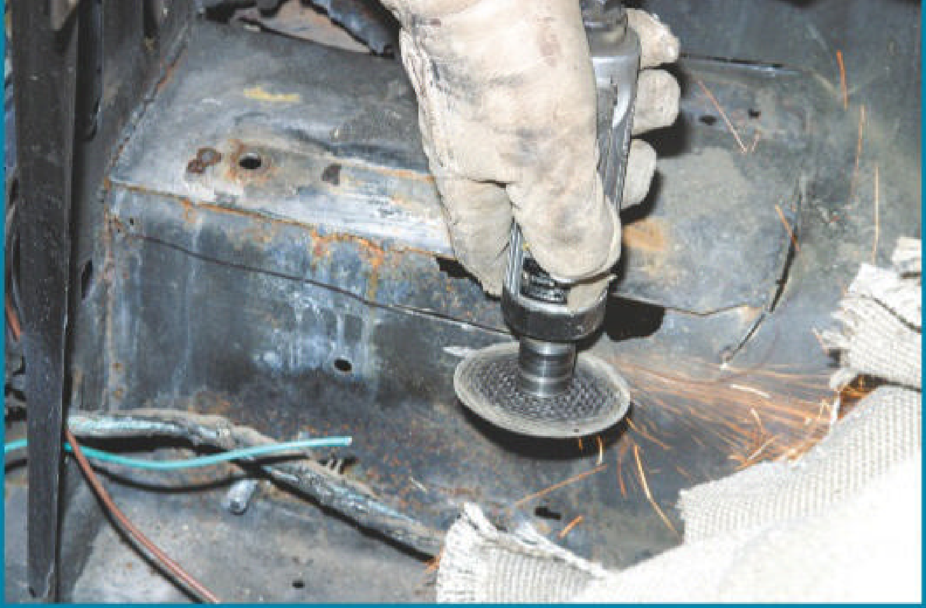

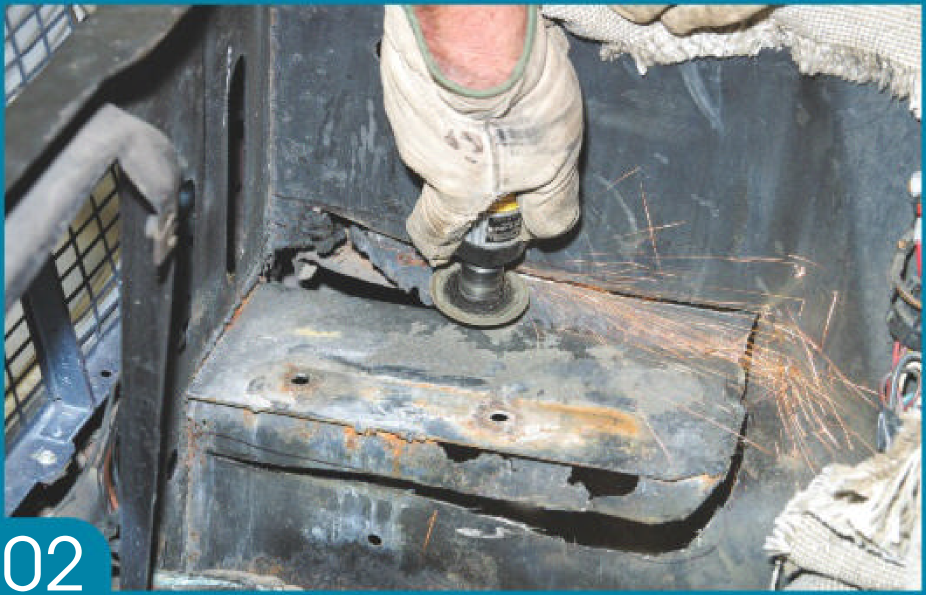

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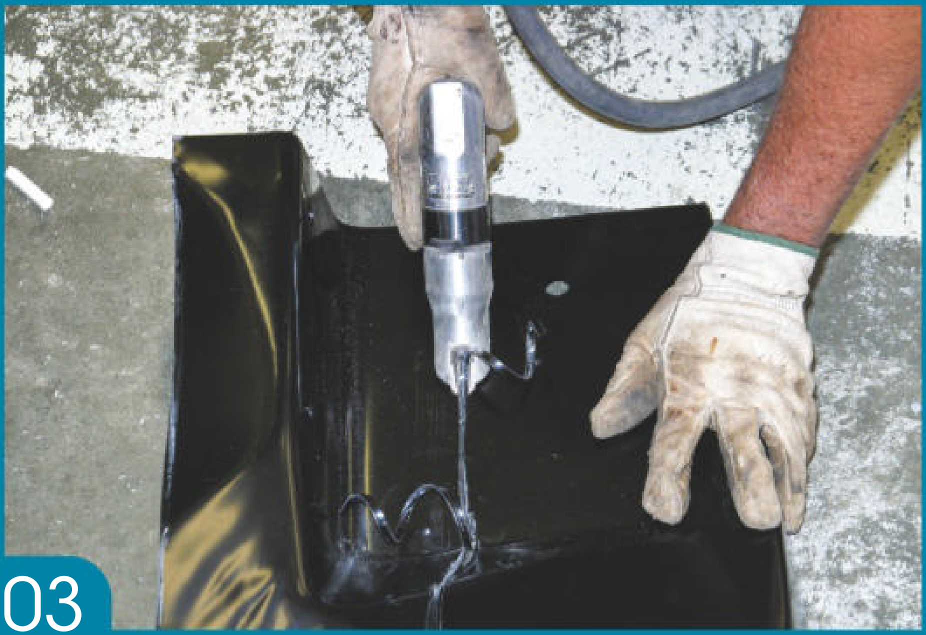
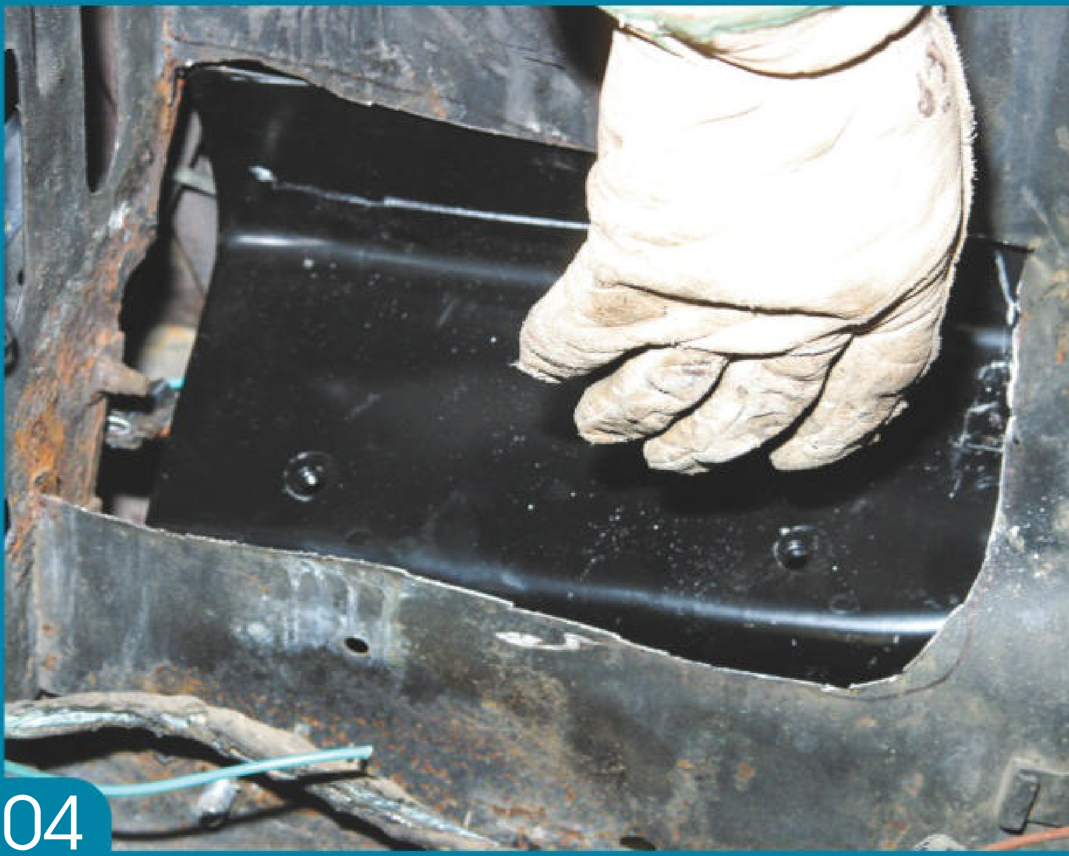


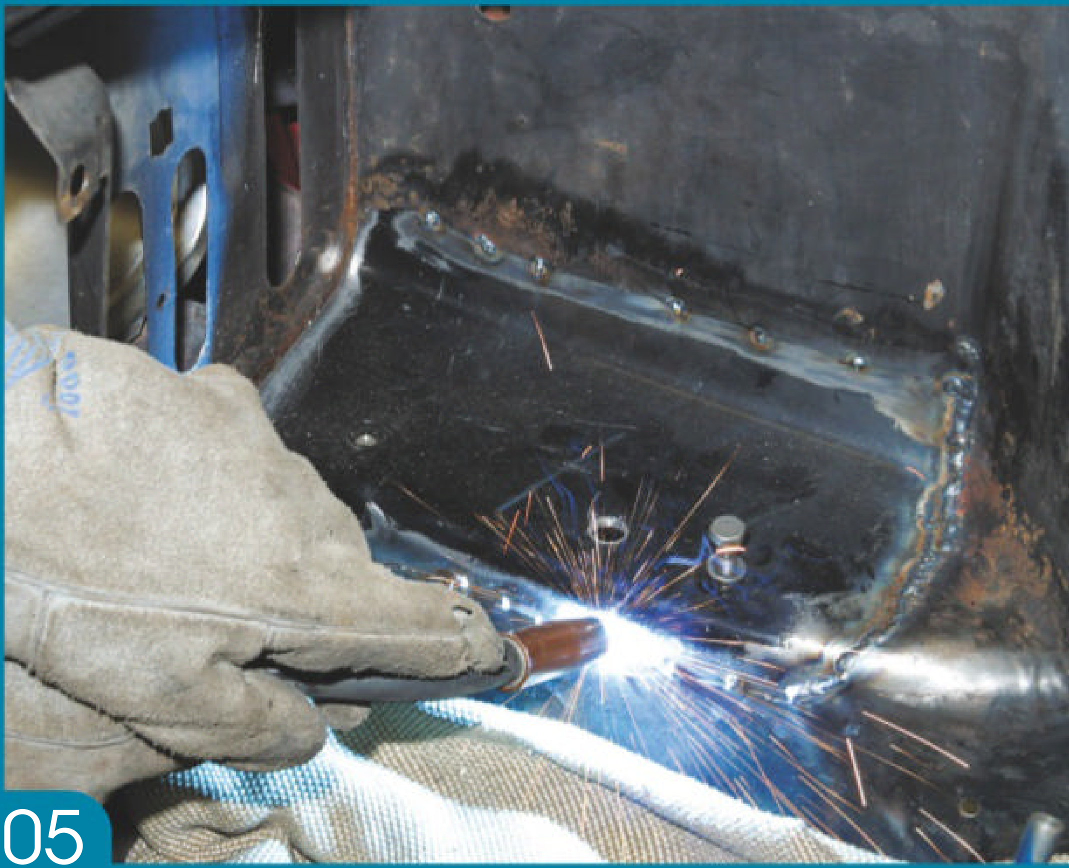
03

2. The rusted-out apron and patch are cut out of the apron as shown. This is a tricky patch due to location and shape. Achieving a perfect fit takes patience. This is a butt joint patch, which is more challenging because the reproduction apron isn't going to line up perfectly. **3.** We're using a reproduction inner fender apron from National Parts Depot for this project. Instead of using the entire apron, the battery portion of the panel is cut out for this patch job. When it is finished, you will never be able to tell there was a rust issue.



04

4. The more challenging portion of this patch job involves working the patch with a hammer and dolly to fit the existing apron prior to welding. Working the metal this way involves another skill set, but with some patience, the novice can get there. **5.** After significant cutting, trimming, and shaping, we have achieved a perfect fit to blend this patch into the existing apron. The patch is welded as shown, then ground smooth on both sides. Once primed and painted satin black, it defied detection. With patience and close attention to detail, you can do this.



05

SOURCES:

Harbor Freight • 800-444-3353 • 888-866-5797 (Technical Support) • harborfreight.com
National Parts Depot • 800-874-7595 • 352-861-8700 • npdlink.com
The Restomod Shop • 209-942-3013 • therestomodshop.com

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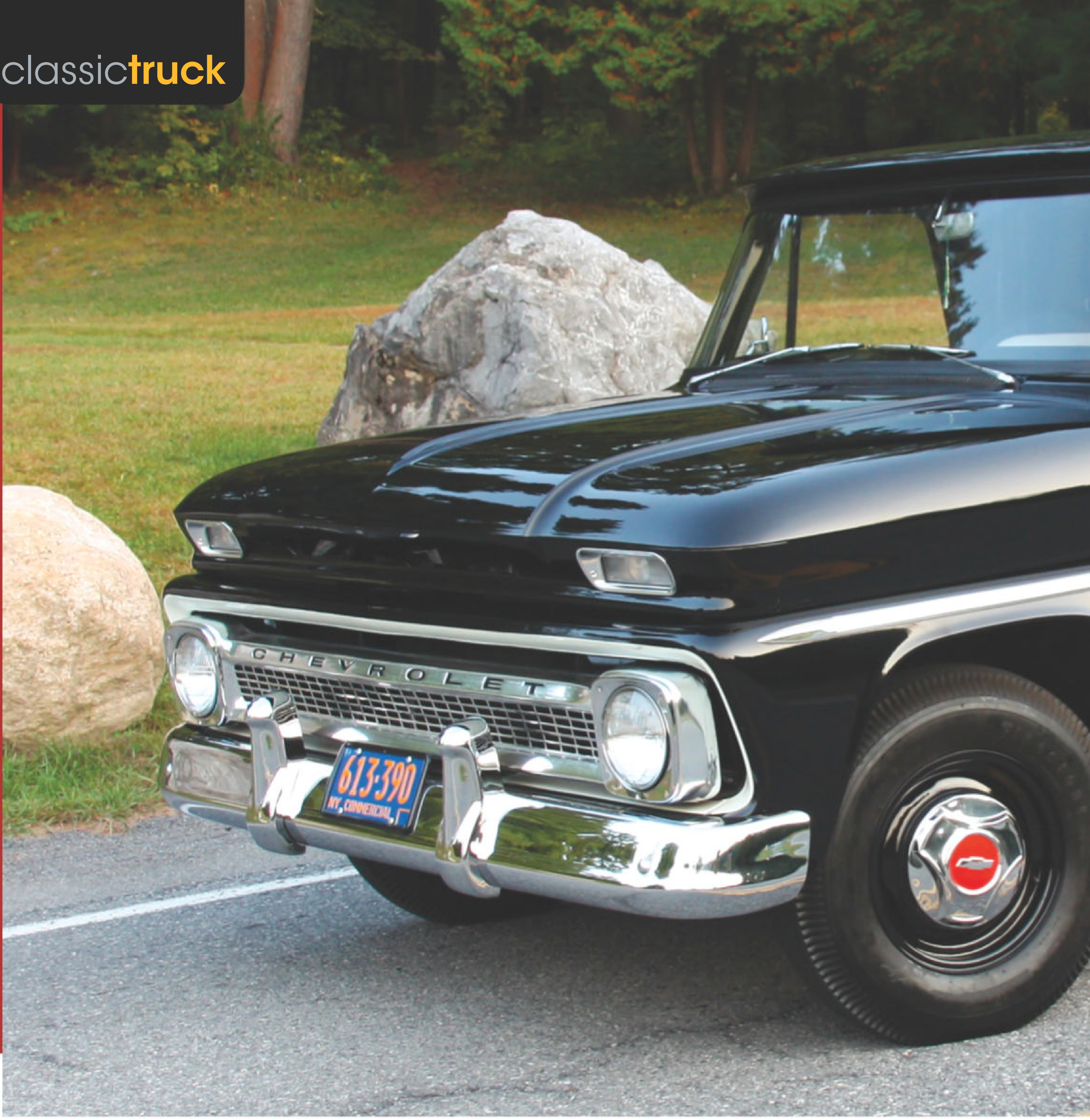


Civil Servant

Trucks like this 1966 Chevy C10 led pickups out of their agricultural past and toward a more consumer-friendly future

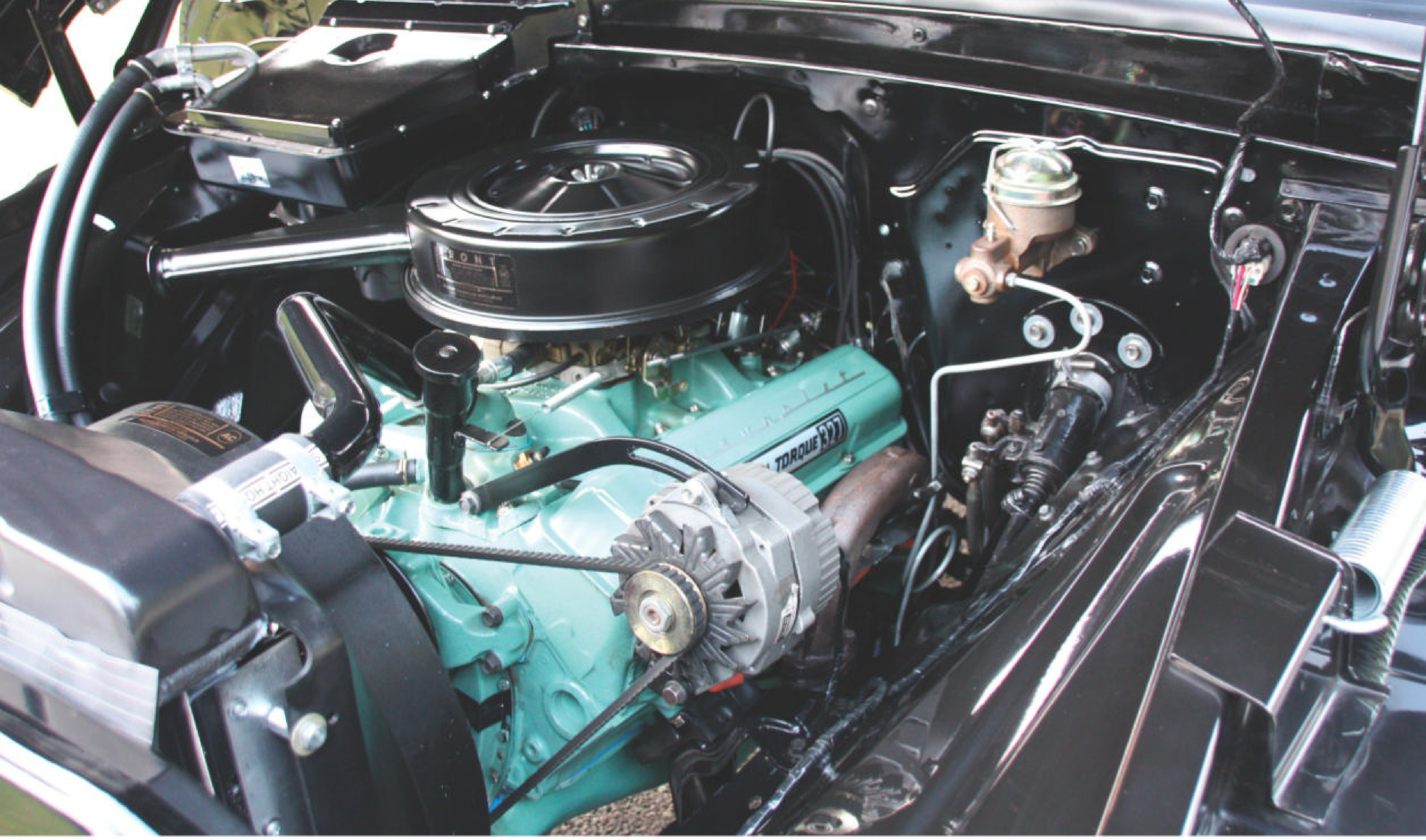
BY JEFF KOCH • PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID CONWILL

Today, in most of America, pickup trucks used as cars are an accepted norm — they're America's best-selling vehicles for a reason. Whether it's their unabashedly broad-shouldered macho style, the can-do capability in any weather and over any terrain, or the full-framed toughness baked into every build, a pickup truck makes a statement.

Pickups even make sense in places like California, despite gas nudging up against $7 a gallon there at press time — rugged construction and tall tires soak up ruts and bumps on the notoriously poorly paved freeway system. Pickups offer comfort that a modern car, with its low-profile rubber and Nürburgring-tuned suspension, simply cannot provide.

The use of trucks as cars on the American road has been a full-blown trend since at least the '70s, but even before this it took years of people realizing that trucks were increasingly comfortable to drive — and that the advertising hyperbole was in many cases true. The increased levels of civility came from product planners seeing beyond truck-as-tool, and the builders engineering increased levels of comfort and style, even across a single generation of truck.

Take our feature vehicle, for example. The truck on these pages is a 1966 Chevrolet C-10 half-ton pickup, brought back to the condition seen here by owner Gary Genoron of Lake Lucerne, New York. It is the ultimate iteration of this generation of C-10, and if you place it next to a 1960 C-10, you'd be loath to see the through-line between them: hoods, cabs, drivelines, and front suspension all changed over the course of seven seasons. Only the 115-inch wheelbase,



bed selection, and Chevy's desire to blend the on-the-road comfort of its best-selling full-size models with legendary truck toughness remained.

What arrived in 1960 was a big step forward from the 1955-'59 "Task Force" models. The '50s rigs had solid axles and leaf springs at both ends; Chevy's '60 C-10 two-wheel-drive half-tons arrived with torsion-bar independent front suspension and coils holding up the 12-bolt solid rear axle. (A heavier-duty leaf-sprung rear was available for the pickup traditionalist.) A drop-center ladder frame with X-shaped crossmember allowed bodies that were simultaneously lower and roomier. They were also wider, offering useful increases in shoulder, head, and leg room, along with six inches of additional hip room. Noise-deadening insulation lived between the roof skin and a ribbed inner panel. The windshield was 26 percent larger and wrapped around, as windshields did in those days. Engines included the 235-cu.in. inline six and a 175-hp 283-cu.in. V-8.

There were subtler changes at work, too. The lower ride height—up to seven inches at the roof compared to a '59—meant that it felt more car-like to drive, not to mention a lower center of gravity to get rid of that wobbly, up-high feeling. The lower cab also made the '60 C-10 easier to get in and out of, and the wider cab meant that it was more comfortable too. Moving the front axle back nearly two inches and adding more than five and a half inches to the back of the cab not only made it roomier, it also granted better weight distribution.

> *It had a good-condition body and frame and had the 327, which is rare.*

But evolution soon took hold—and we don't mean the usual grille changes and fender-badge placement that were part-and-parcel of most American cars and trucks in the '50s and '60s. The hood was changed first: a pair of jet-age-looking nacelles over each headlamp cluster were smoothed out in 1962. At the same time, a single-headlamp-per-side grille replaced the previous four-eyed look. Small potatoes, perhaps, but an indicator of what Chevrolet had up its sleeve. A year later, Chevy ditched the front torsion-bar set-up in favor of more traditional coil-sprung double-A-arm suspension, and added a new base inline-six engine. A whole new cab greeted buyers of 1964 trucks: The wraparound windshield and its vertical A-pillar were retired, replaced by a traditional A-pillar that matched the windshield rake. Chevy claimed "increased cab torsional strength" at the time, but it's just as fair to say that wrap-around glass was old hat by then and needed freshening. For 1965, both air conditioning and Chevy's 220-hp 327-cu.in. small-block V-8 were on the option sheets. Automatic-equipped V-8 C-10s were given the new Turbo-Hydramatic transmission in 1966, and reverse lamps appeared beneath the taillamps on Fleetside models like the one in our photos.

Gary's truck, filling that ever-present nostalgia hole that often presents itself when a parent (in this case, Gary's dad) owned a similar vehicle, turned out to be

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nicely equipped—not loaded with air conditioning or automatic transmission, but built with Deluxe heater (from a time when heaters were optional!), chrome side moldings and bumpers that gleam nicely against the clean Tuxedo Black flanks, and the optional 327-cu.in. engine (painted seafoam green for truck applications) under that broad hood. The standard transmission, a three-on-the-tree, is on board. Gary found it in 2014, though not in the shape you see it here.

"After an online search, I found this one," he says. "It had a good-condition body and frame and had the 327, which is rare. I'd say that the paint and body work were 90 percent done when I bought it, but the mechanicals were only 30 percent done." That meant finding all manner of period-correct pieces to make it not just run right, but to look and feel absolutely period-perfect correct.

Gary notes that "some of the engine parts, wiring, tires, and interior" were missing. A few parts were reproduced, like the 7.00x15 bias-ply Firestone tires and a complete correct black-and-white interior from LMC Truck. Some parts, particularly in the engine bay, took a lot of searching—to the point that his C-10 wasn't completed to Gary's satisfaction until 2020. When a truck as simple as a '60s Chevy pickup, with the enormous parts support that this generation of truck gets from the aftermarket, gets stuck in a seven-year turnaround, you know that the owner is refusing to cut corners and is making everything right.

And when we say right, we mean correct for this particular era of truck. The block code was shared between trucks and cars, but the casting 3782461 "camel-back" cylinder heads (with their 1.94/1.50-inch valves, correct for 1964-'66) had no accessory holes for mounting options like, for example, power steering. Nothing less than factory-, vehicle-, and era-correct would do.

At this point, Gary has achieved his goal, winning trophies and awards all over upstate New York—not to mention a photo shoot here in *HCC* (and, we're willing to wager, a slot in next year's *Pickups and SUVs* Hemmings calendar too...). The only thing left to do, Gary figures, is a correct contrasting squirt of white paint on the roof--tough to see from most angles but a good hedge against the sun heat-soaking the top surfaces of the truck at car shows. Well, that and drive it about a hundred miles a month.

Look, no one is going to believe that a bigger small-block V-8, automatic transmission, air conditioning, and a roomier cab are going to single-handedly call up the truck-as-car revolution we've experienced over the past few decades. No one is going to mistake it for a Cadillac. At the same time, it's easy to see how Chevy's engineers scrambled, within a single seven-year generation of truck, to go from a plain ol' bare-bones pick 'em up to something that had a good deal more usability and comfort (and therefore consumer appeal) baked in. Trucks like this one played their part in the mainstreaming of these commercial haulers into America's driveways: a total of 57,386 C-10 half-tons on a 115-inch wheelbase were built for the 1966 model year. It's a crucial stepping stone between the hearty agricultural models of the not-so-distant past and the uber-plush cruisers and/or unrelenting rock crushers (or both simultaneously) of the not-so-distant future. Gary's V-8-powered 1966 C-10 is a terrific example of a big, important marker in the evolution of the Great American Pickup Truck.

CHEVROLET
613-390

AUCTION NEWS&HIGHLIGHTS

BY MATTHEW LITWIN AND TOM COMERRO
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY
BONHAMS AND AS CREDITED

Bonhams Auctions – 2022 Quail Lodge Sale

Annual sale in Carmel-By-The-Sea delivers a $27.9 million result

BONHAMS HAS BEEN A CONSISTENT PILLAR WHEN IT COMES TO THE auctions that serve as a prelude to the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance. As is tradition for the company, Bonhams held its one-day sale—this year on August 19—at the sprawling Quail Lodge & Country Club in Carmel, California. This year, 140 lots were offered, which included three vintage motorcycles and 10 in-period race cars.

On the California coast, exotics tend to claim the top spots on the sales ladder. Such was the case here, where a trio of European exotics blasted their way to the top, led by a 1955 Ferrari 250 Europa GT that achieved $2,095,000. It was followed by a 1969 Lamborghini Miura P400 S that commanded $1,957,500 and a 1956 Mercedes-Benz 300SL Gullwing coupe that realized $1,737,500. Landing in fifth was a domestic make: a 1931 Stutz DV-32 convertible Victoria by LeBaron that sold for $1,435,000, one of eight cars in total that exceeded $1 million. Along with the trio of cars we present here, Bonhams sold 121 lots (equating to an 86.4 percent sell-through rate) for $27,935,790 million. For more results from this sale, and a calendar of future auctions, visit bonhams.com/motorcars.

1956 FORD THUNDERBIRD

Reserve: None
Sale Price: $106,400

Avg. Market Range:
$65,000 - $86,500

Nearly seven decades after Ford introduced what would prove to be the "first-gen" Thunderbird, there's little that needs to be said about its status among enthusiasts today. But what about when they were new? Well, we know this 1956 model was originally purchased by film and stage legend Humphrey Bogart. According to biographer Joe Hyams, the actor suffered from chronic pain that hindered his ability to manually-shift his Jaguar, so "Bogie" traded it in for the Ford. Built in Colonial White, it was painted Slate Gray before delivery. After Bogart's passing, the estate retained the Ford until 1959. Only a handful of owners have been the custodian of it since.

1911 BUICK MODEL 26

Reserve: None
Selling Price: $35,840

Avg. Market Range:
N/A

When early Buicks come to mind, most think of the popular Model 10, but by 1911 the venerable automaker was offering nine additional series; the most powerful of these were equipped with four-cylinder engines. This included the upscale Model 26 roadster, like the example presented here, built on a 106-inch wheelbase chassis. Its four-cylinder was a 210-cu.in. unit capable of making 30 hp. Despite their size and weight (2,100 pounds), each of the 1,000 built were considered "sporty" cars. Who purchased this one when new and where, and much of its history thereafter, has been lost to time; in the mid-Eighties it was rediscovered and restored. It still sold handsomely despite its patina.

1958 CHRYSLER 300 D

Reserve: None
Selling Price: $92,400

Avg. Market Range:
$50,000 - $90,000

Veteran readers of this title might recognize this top-of-the line 1958 Chrysler 300D hardtop, as it was the subject of a full feature and cover in *HCC* some years ago. It was equipped from new with the 392 Hemi engine, making it a true gentleman's performance car, though someone let it linger in yards both in California and Montana, causing it to age back into earth. That is, until 2005, when a pair of collectors rescued the luxury ride and treated it to a full restoration over the next 30 months with the help of renowned experts. The result was a long list of impressive accolades. The 300 has been kept in tip-top fresh restoration condition since, so it was little surprise to see it sell so well.

LEGEND

Reserve: Minimum price owner will accept
Selling Price: What the vehicle sold for (including the buyer's premium)
Average Market Range: Values coincide with current market trends for vehicles rated from condition #2- to #1, respectively

WORLDWIDE

Auburn Auction Results

WORLDWIDE AUCTIONEERS HELD ITS ANNUAL AUBURN AUCTION AT THE BEGINNING OF September, and for the first time, it was a three-day event. The expanded auction realized $25 million in sales with a strong 89-percent sell-through during the Labor Day weekend. One of the highlights of the auction was the no-reserve sale of The Rockhound Collection, which consisted of more than 75 vehicles. The five pictured above, a 1964 Ferrari 330GT 2+2 ($346,000), a 1949 Hudson Commodore 8 convertible ($43,680), a 1960 Porsche 356 Roadster ($184,800), a 1967 Porsche 912 ($91,840), and a 1931 Duesenberg J Blind Quarter Club Sedan, were just a sampling of the eclectic collection that seemed to have something for everyone. The Duesy had seen much of the world, after being sold new in Paris to a prince from the Austro-Hungarian Empire; it eventually made its way to its current owner in Lebanon before coming stateside. It underwent a single repaint and kept its original engine, body, and chassis. It was recently used during the 2022 Enthusiast Tour—Worldwide's collector car tour—which was centered around the Midwest this past April. When the bidding ended, the Duesenberg sold for $857,500.

Outside of The Rockhound Collection, a last-year Auburn was among the many cars to find a new owner. Fully documented, this 1936 852 SC Phaeton was a Full Classic that was ready for shows and touring. Powered by an eight-cylinder Schwitzer-Cummings supercharged Lycoming engine, it achieved better breathing through a Stromberg carburetor and was capable of 150 hp. Finished restorations included a new paint job, new chrome plating on trim and hardware, plus a properly fitting top and leather upholstery. Other points of interest include dual side-mount spares, whitewall tires, and rebuilt brakes including new wheel cylinders. The Auburn celebrated its homecoming by hammering in at $84,000. Full results from the Auburn Auction are now available at worldwideauctioneers.com.

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Cars and More Auctioned at Elmer's Toy Museum

MORE THAN 2,000 CARS AND CAR-RELATED items came up for bid at Elmer's Auto and Toy Museum in Fountain City, Wisconsin, with the Mecum-held auction achieving a total of $8.5 million in overall sales. Most of the cars that changed hands needed some servicing, as they were display vehicles that had endured long-term storage over the years. Among the many fixer-uppers and projects was a 1964 Amphicar 770. Perhaps the most famous dual-purpose production car ever made, the amphibious vehicle was finished in white and red with a black top and white interior. It only showed 6,556 miles on the odometer and its four-cylinder engine was mated to a Hermes four-speed land-and-water transmission. It had been a while since it had used either its land or sea-legs, as it was last registered in 1977. In an odd coincidence, the Amphicar 770, last driven in '77, sold for $77,000.

Among the pedal cars, toys, petroliana, and automobilia to sell was an original 1929 Ford Snap-On wooden toolbox. Snap-On recently celebrated its centennial and this toolbox, which was a time-capsule of the company's early days, received lively bidding. It was in original condition and the wood had a lot of scars, paint, stains, chips, and wear. The casters were original and all of the drawers were present and accounted for. Best of all, each drawer featured period-correct original contents from tools to hardware and more. Vintage decals and stickers served as old-school passport stamps for this classic piece of garage history. The wooden toolbox and its contents sold for $35,400. Full results from Elmer's are now available at mecum.com.

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BY MARK J. McCOURT

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HEMMINGS AUCTIONS IS OUR LIVE, ONLINE AUCTION SITE STAFFED BY customer service professionals ready to help bidders and sellers with any questions. A wide variety of classic and specialty vehicles from all eras are up for bid. Auctions run for two weeks, and qualified bidders place their bids electronically. Once a vehicle is accepted into the auction, the seller pays only a $99.95 listing fee. The winning bidder is responsible for a 5-percent fee on all completed auctions. The following are examples of auctions that transpired during the month leading up to press time. If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, email Director of Auction Operations Terry Shea: terryshea@hemmings.com.

1965 LAND ROVER SERIES IIA

Reserve: $27,000

Selling Price: $31,500

Recent Market Range: $22,100-$35,800

Today's expensive, complex, and luxurious Land Rovers trace their lineage directly back to this anvil-tough 4x4. With its 109-inch wheelbase, the four-door truck could accommodate more than 10 people in four rows of benches, the last two facing each other in the cargo area. This example was described as largely original, with recent servicing and suspension and brake work. Circa 70,300 miles registered on the 70-hp four-cylinder/four-speed-manual driveline, which was noted to leak a bit but operate without issue, like the four-wheel-drive system. The aluminum body was in fine shape, with good paint and the desirable Tropical Roof. The appeal of an honest workhorse meant a solid result.

1955 BUICK SPECIAL

Reserve: $15,500

Selling Price: $26,250

Recent Market Range: $9,900-$16,800

The most-affordable four-door in Buick's 1955 lineup was the well-equipped Series 40 Special, an example of which was this attractively restored sedan. It wore circa-decade-old two-tone basecoat/clearcoat paint in "excellent" condition, over a fully intact two-tone interior. A factory A/C system with R134a conversion was installed but divulged to not currently work. The 264-cubic-inch V-8 received a top-end rebuild, and both it and the Dynaflow transmission functioned properly, save for a small fluid leak. The suspension and brakes were all recently serviced, and the Coker radial tires were four years old. The drive-away appeal of this sedan led to it bringing an impressive $10,000 over reserve.

1910 MAXWELL AA RUNABOUT

Reserve: $15,000

Selling Price: $32,550

Recent Market Range: $13,990-$24,100

Maxwell is an important marque in American automotive history, as famous for its accomplishments as for its innovations. This veteran two-seater was restored in the early 1990s and was said to remain in very good condition, with minor paint cracking around some fasteners and a bit of flaking on the leaf springs. The black seat leather was said to be original to the car and in great shape considering its age. The AA promised full operation, its 8-hp flat-twin engine noted to leak oil as per its design. It was being sold with spare parts and extra components, including kerosene lamps. A video showed it being crank-started and driven. This brass-era Runabout more than doubled its reserve.

LEGEND

Reserve: Minimum price owner will accept

Selling Price*: What the vehicle sold for, inclusive of buyer's 5-percent fee (*sold as a Make Offer listing following the live auction)

Recent Market Range: The low-to-high value range for the vehicle based on published results of similar vehicles sold at auction over the previous 18 months

1975 AMC PACER X

Reserve: $12,000
Selling Price: $37,275

Recent Market Range:
$11,210-$17,420

Yes, you read that right: This '75 Pacer more than tripled its reserve, bringing nearly $20,000 over top market range and setting a new record for a non-*Wayne's World* Pacer. What prompted the 28 bids? The AMC had fewer than 27,000 miles on its odometer and was built with desirable options including the "X" trim package, automatic transmission, A/C, 8-track stereo, alloy wheels, and more. The 258-cu.in. inline-six was not rebuilt and looked tidy, as did the undercarriage, save for a few power-steering fluid drips. The paint was very good, but some discoloration on the vinyl roof was noted. The white and burgundy interior looked excellent. The seller answered questions and history was made.

1988 MERCEDES-BENZ 560 SL

Reserve: $24,000
Selling Price: $26,250
Recent Market Range: $21,220-$33,560

Turning heads in a very unusual shade of pale metallic Willow Green, this penultimate-year R107-chassis 560 SL appeared to be a very fine driver, with little over 76,000 original miles on its 227-hp V-8 engine and four-speed automatic transmission. The Mercedes-Benz's cosmetics were equally tidy, with reconditioned wheels, and just a few paint chips mentioned as external blemishes. The Parchment leather-upholstered interior looked inviting, while a few cracks in the wood trim's finish were noted. The folding fabric roof was called "brand new" and the factory hardtop, on a storage stand, was included. Ample photography and three videos showed the SL in its best light; the result was solid.

1949 CADILLAC SERIES 61

Reserve: $45,000
Selling Price: $65,100
Recent Market Range: $38,000-$56,100

Cadillac's 1949 Series Sixty-One was already famed for its "aircraft-type rear fenders," as the brochure described its nascent tailfins, and the fastback styling of the Club Coupe body style cemented its appeal. This example was said to be largely original, save for an undated repaint, and its matching-numbers 331-cubic-inch V-8 and Hydra-Matic transmission were rebuilt to factory specifications. The driveline parts displayed no faults, while the chassis was clean and, like the body, was said to be totally rust-free. The chrome and glass looked good, as did the green cloth interior, which displayed slight wear due to its age. An incredible number of bids pushed this Caddy way over the top.

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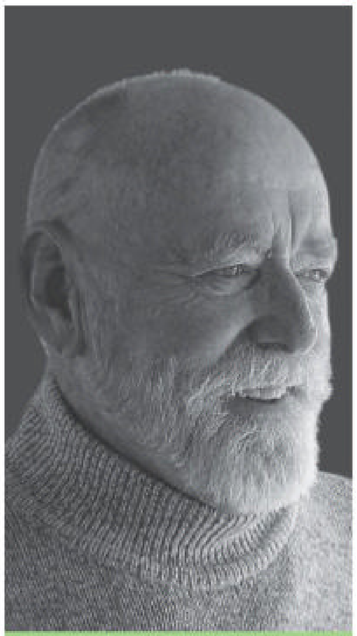

See the U.S.A. …

I grant, old Chevrolets are like belly buttons. Everybody has one, but nobody talks about them. Actually, I own two: A 1955 Bel Air Beauville station wagon and a 1958 Apache pickup. Why do I have them? Well, it all started back in 1958 when I acquired my first car, a 1947 Fleetline Aerosedan for $25. It ran, but it had 187,000 miles and needed everything.

That old Chevy was a blessing, though. I spent that whole summer learning how to work on cars just to keep it going, all so I could take my steady girlfriend to the movies. I learned things like: The wires going to the spark plugs are arranged in a special sequence in the distributor. And: That obnoxious clacking noise coming from the engine is loose tappets that need to be adjusted periodically with a feeler gauge while the engine is warmed up and running. I also learned how to patch inner tubes and that those little balance weights on the wheels are there for a reason.

> "I spent that whole summer learning how to work on cars just to keep it going…"

Back then I made frequent trips to Hap's Auto Parts in Lakewood, California, where I grew up; I still go there today. It's a small auto supply that can get anything you need for your old Chevy. They have great pro parts pullers, and they have the old catalogs and part numbers too. In fact, I popped in a couple of days ago for an oil filter for the 1955 wagon and they had it in stock.

I got lazy a few years ago and went to another "auto supply" nearer to where I live now—one that specializes in air fresheners—and asked for 10 feet of 3/16-inch brake line, because when I restore a car, I always replace the brake system too. The kid behind the counter came back with 10 feet of *rubber* line and plopped it on the counter. I explained to him that I meant *steel* line. He just looked at the rubber and said, "This will work."

In my neighborhood back in the day, you were not a real man if you paid people to work on your car or wore gloves to do so yourself. We also parked our cars on our lawns occasionally when we washed them, so the water did double duty. We changed our oil on the lawn too, so the drippings would be absorbed, and so we had a cushy place to lie down while under the car. Creepers cost money.

From what I have said so far, you may be assuming I am a Chevy guy, but actually, I have restored more Packards than any other brand, and I have done a couple of Volkswagens, a Morris Minor, two La Salles, and an Oldsmobile over the years as well. But through it all I have always had a Chevy to drive while I was waiting for parts for the others. And I have always had a Bowtie pickup to retrieve those components when they arrived.

I have owned Chevys—mostly Tri-Fives—for the last 60 years, mostly because I first learned how to work on them, and as a result I could put one together blindfolded and over the legal limit. Plus, I have always loved the way they look, drive, and smell. The fact that Chevy offered two of the best, most reliable engines ever designed—take your choice—is a big plus too.

No Chevrolets are Classics. At least not according to the Classic Car Club of America. Indeed, they were General Motors' low-price offerings. And yes, there are also plenty of Ford aficionados who feel just as strongly about their Fairlanes and Fiestas as I do about my Bowties. No doubt the Mopar buffs with their Belvederes and Valiants love them too. For those of us who grew up with such mundane chariots, they are like old shoes—comfortable and familiar, yet fun to drive.

If you are a novice DIY type who would like to restore an old car yourself, a postwar Chevy is a great place to start. Someone recently pointed out that you could build an entire new 1957 Chevrolet from reproduction parts today! It sounds far-fetched, but it may well be true. There are a plethora of parts sources, many of whom advertise in *HCC* and *Hemmings Motor News*.

You won't be able to mention that you have a one-off Lincoln, Lagonda, or Lamborghini, but then you won't have to wait for months, and pay dearly for parts from London or Sant'Agata Bolognese either. I highly recommend that younger buffs get their feet wet with a vintage Chevrolet. A pickup is even better because they are nothing if not basic and long-lived. No, you won't be able to break 200 mph at the Nürburgring with your 1959 Apache, but you will be able to bring home sheets of 4 x 8 drywall to redo your bathroom. Whether I am touring with the club or chasing parts, I would rather see the U.S.A. in my Chevrolet.

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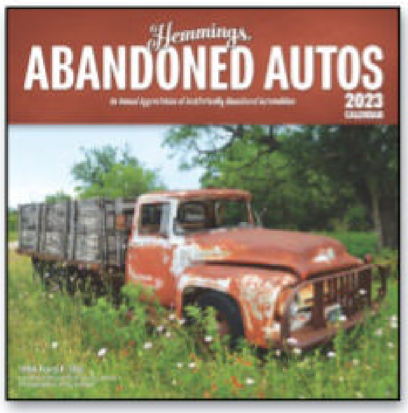
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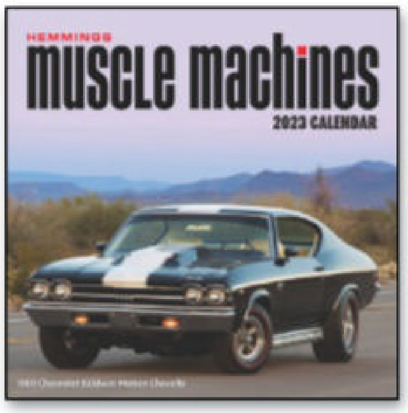
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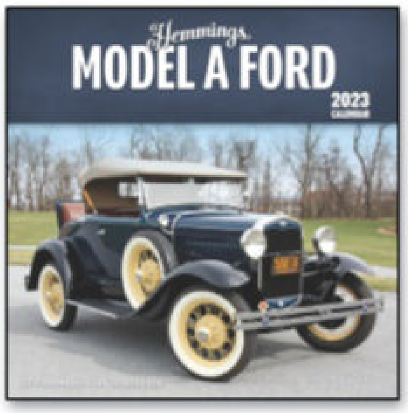
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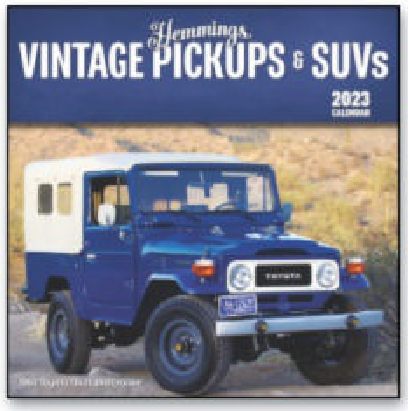
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